

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF  
SPEAKERS-OF-ENGLISH-AS-AN-OTHER-LANGUAGE  
AT MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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JENNIFER M. WICKS









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**EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF  
SPEAKERS-OF-ENGLISH-AS-AN-OTHER-LANGUAGE  
AT MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY**

by

© Jennifer M. Wicks

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in partial fulfilment of the  
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## ABSTRACT

This study presents a qualitative exploration of the experiences of Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language (SEOLs) at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador (MUN). SEOLs represent a unique community of students who have not necessarily been included in research involving international students. This study's categorization of SEOLs seeks to include Canadian students whose first language is not English, thereby focusing on linguistic and cultural issues. Through the use of multiple in-depth interviews and journals, six participants contributed narrative accounts of their experiences. Utilizing a constructivist framework and postmodern critiques of existing literature, the complexities of language and culture for SEOLs in higher education were explored. Participants' experiences demonstrate the multifaceted nature of language learning and a range of issues relating specifically to the English language. Implications for the university and surrounding community, and recommendations for further research in this area are provided.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Appendices.....	v
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Purpose of the study.....	2
1.3 Research questions.....	4
1.4 Background of the study.....	4
1.4.1 <i>Cross-cultural research: The insider/outsider dilemma</i> .....	4
1.4.2 <i>Personal experiences as a starting point for research</i> .....	6
1.4.3 <i>Memorial University and SEOLs</i> .....	9
1.4.4 <i>Discourses of diversity and the motivation for this study</i> .....	10
1.5 The participants.....	13
1.5.1 <i>Liz: “English is English”</i> .....	13
1.5.2 <i>Hunter: “I have to adjust naturally because things work different here”</i> .....	15
1.5.3 <i>Sylvie: “I’m not just Quebec”</i> .....	16
1.5.4 <i>Khaled: “[I ordered milk] ‘cause that was the only word I knew”</i> .....	17
1.5.5 <i>Inder: “English is like your second girlfriend”</i> .....	18
1.5.6 <i>Jo: “Not all people are nice here like I was thinking”</i> .....	19
1.6 Significance of the study.....	22
1.7 Conclusion.....	23
Chapter 2 Review of the literature.....	24
2.1 Introduction.....	24
2.2 Exploring the experiences of SEOLs in academia.....	24
2.3 Cross-cultural adjustment.....	33
2.4 Student services for SEOLs.....	43
2.5 Feminism and postmodernism in cross-cultural research.....	47
2.6 Language and culture.....	50
2.7 Contributions of this study.....	55
2.8 Conclusion.....	57
Chapter 3 Methodology.....	58
3.1 Introduction.....	58
3.2 Epistemological underpinnings.....	58
3.3 Participant selection.....	60
3.4 Data collection.....	61
3.4.1 <i>Guided interviews</i> .....	61
3.4.2 <i>Multiple interviews in research</i> .....	62
3.4.3 <i>Journals and inclusion of textual data</i> .....	64
3.5 Ethical considerations.....	65



3.5.1 <i>Free and informed consent.</i> .....	65
3.5.2 <i>Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.</i> .....	66
3.5.3 <i>Cross-cultural issues.</i> .....	67
3.6 Analysis of the findings.....	68
3.6.1 <i>Approaches to analysis.</i> .....	68
3.6.2 <i>Analysis of interview data.</i> .....	69
3.6.3 <i>Analysis of journals.</i> .....	70
3.7 Limitations.....	71
3.8 Conclusions.....	73
Chapter 4 Language learning.....	74
4.1 Introduction.....	74
4.2 Language learning and the conditions for communication.....	75
4.3 “There’s a difference in my dialect actually”: “Standard” and world Englishes.....	79
4.4 “I was not confident about my English at all”: Self-efficacy in English.....	90
4.5 Language socialization: Narratives of strategies and challenges.....	102
4.6 “The language that links everybody right now”: Inevitability of learning English.....	108
4.7 Status and access for English speakers.....	112
4.8 Communication through English.....	115
4.9 Conclusion.....	119
Chapter 5 Culture and adjustment.....	121
5.1 Introduction.....	121
5.2 Perspectives of culture and adjustment.....	122
5.3 SEOLs, Newfoundland, and the local people: Some perceptions.....	123
5.4 Comparisons of home and host cultures.....	131
5.5 The role of support in cross-cultural adjustment.....	140
5.6 Challenges to cross-cultural adjustment.....	150
5.7 Stereotypes of language and culture.....	156
5.8 Discourses of difference and Othering.....	163
5.9 Conclusion.....	178
Chapter 6 Conclusions.....	179
6.1 Introduction.....	179
6.2 SEOLs and diversity in higher education.....	180
6.2.1 <i>Language and communication.</i> .....	181
6.2.2 <i>Culture and a language of critique.</i> .....	185
6.3 Summary of recommendations and implications for further research.....	190
6.4 Conclusion.....	192
References.....	194
Appendices.....	206

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A:	ICEHR approval.....	206
Appendix B:	Advertisement for participants.....	207
Appendix C:	Interview consent form.....	208
Appendix D:	Journal consent form.....	209
Appendix E:	Interview guiding questions.....	210
Appendix F:	Journal guide.....	213

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language (SEOLs) at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador (MUN) represent a unique community of students who, as learners studying in a language other than their mother tongue with particular linguistic and cultural needs, have not necessarily been included in research on international students. This study's categorization of SEOLs seeks to establish discourses that include Canadian students whose first language is not English, thereby focusing on linguistic issues in addition to issues of cultural diversity.

Memorial University has undertaken initiatives to encourage recruitment of both out-of-province, and international students, and envisions itself as a “global” institution (Etchegary, 1996, ¶ 2). Due to a lack of research involving the students themselves in determining which issues are of most relevance or importance, questions remain unanswered as to the ability of the university to adequately address the needs of SEOLs. In order to allow students an opportunity to express their experiences as international or Canadian SEOLs at Memorial University, this study approaches these issues from the perspectives of the students, as opposed to the perspective of the university and its support services or recruitment initiatives. In conducting this research I hope to offer new first-hand perspectives on issues that were raised by SEOLs and, as a result, to offer suggestions for future initiatives to facilitate the university's progress toward diversity in terms of its student population. Communication and dialogue are important in the cultural and linguistic diversity in institutions of higher education. Such issues are integral not only to SEOLs and to the institutions recruiting and support services divisions, but also,

are vital to all members of the university community, including those members whose first language *is* English.

In this chapter, I introduce the aim of the research and provide background for central issues. The six participants are introduced in this chapter, as well as the issue of cross-cultural research, background information about my interest in Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language (SEOLs) and about Memorial University and its role in promoting cultural diversity on campus. The questions guiding my study are included, and the significance of the study is outlined from a range of perspectives including my own, the perspectives of Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language (SEOLs), and the university community at large.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the range of experiences as communicated by a small, diverse sample of SEOLs (6 students: 3 female, 3 male) at Memorial University, focusing on aspects of the students' experiences with language, culture, and education. This in-depth view of such experiences begins a new discussion that emphasizes issues raised, not for recruitment purposes, but rather for the purpose of learning about what it means to be a SEOL at Memorial University. It attempts to fill gaps in the university community's knowledge of student life for those whose first language is not English, and their response to living and learning in this environment.

The choice not to use the term English as a Second Language (ESL) to categorize the participants was informed by Zamel (1995) who notes the "inherently political nature of working with ESL learners," and emphasizes that in many cases English may be a

third or fourth language, not necessarily the second, rendering the term ESL inaccurate and misleading (p. 520). The study was designed to locate a small number of SEOLs on this campus, as opposed to seeking only international students, with the intention of including Canadian SEOLs with languages such as Inuktitut or French as a mother tongue, if possible. Unfortunately no Aboriginal SEOLs volunteered for the study, and therefore issues relevant to this group will not be presented in this study. However, this limitation suggests the need to conduct a study that focuses on the Aboriginal SEOL population in order to uncover issues of relevance for those students.

The study stems from a review of related literature, personal curiosity surfacing from my own experiences as a traveller and as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and questions about the individual experiences of particular SEOLs at Memorial University. Conducting in-depth interviews with a small, diverse sample will provide the personal, in-depth, first-hand narrative accounts not available in previous reports (e.g., Burnaby, 2002; Koenderman, 2000; Parsons, 2000). The interviews were open-ended, and guiding questions are provided in Appendix E.

Open-ended, in-depth interviews (e.g., Leki & Carson, 1997) are vital in the exploration of the experiences of SEOLs as it allows for the emergence of issues deemed important by the students themselves, as opposed to being predetermined by the researcher. Spanning six months, the study allowed for the possibility of changes or fluctuations in the participants' experiences, or shifts in their thinking as they spent more time at the university and in the community. This type of methodology also enabled a view of these students' lives at different periods in the school year, some of which may be perceived as more stressful or demanding than others, and thus influence the types of

narratives shared by the participants. The study followed broadly delineated research questions to provide a central focus, or “bulls-eye” (Robinson, 1985, p. 103), however were not intended to limit the study to predefined categories or topics. Robinson (1985) states that the bulls-eye approach provides “a means of facilitating interaction and positive attitudes between students of different cultures” (p. 103). In other words, it provides a basis both to guide the interview itself, and to guide the research relationship. These guiding questions are presented in the next section.

### 1.3 Research questions

The following research questions are proposed as a guide for the study:

- 1) What are the experiences of a selected number of SEOLs currently studying at Memorial University?
- 2) What can be learned from the individual experiences of these SEOLs at Memorial University?

These questions are proposed to guide the focus of the research, but are not intended to limit the research, or to deliberately manipulate the themes that arise from the in-depth interview structure. As I mentioned above, the motivation for this research emerged from some of my personal experiences and interests- issues described in the following section.

### 1.4 Background of the study

#### *1.4.1 Cross-cultural research: The insider/ outsider dilemma.*

I decided to conduct a cross-cultural study because of a personal interest in students’ experiences of studying in a language other than their mother tongue, and

because of my background as a teacher of EFL. According to Toma (2000), “Because subjective qualitative research is inherently personal, researchers cannot and should not hide their attachment to the topic and persons they study. The attachment is what makes two-way data work” (p. 182). Toma also argues that involvement and engagement allow for rich, useful research, as well as providing the researcher with an insider view of the phenomenon being explored. However, reluctant to assume the possibility of attaining an emic or insider view into the stories of my participants, I sought accounts of other feminist researchers detailing cross-cultural research activities.

In a study involving White researchers Archibald and Crnkovich (1995), and Aboriginal participants, the researchers maintain, “While we are usually at a disadvantage in working with women whose first and sometimes only language is Inuktitut, we do have one clear advantage: at no time can we presume to speak on behalf of Inuit women” (p. 113). This demonstrates a view of “outsider” that indicates the benefit of highlighting such a position in the presentation of research, as opposed to focusing on what is missing in the perspective of the outsider. By stating unequivocally my position in relation to the participants (i.e. background, intentions, personal experiences, assumptions), I follow the example established by Archibald and Crnkovich and explicitly reveal my inability to assume the same access to the information gleaned from my research as those providing the information. However, to understand the words of my participants would mean to share their experiences and cultural background, which I do not. To listen to their words, and offer interpretations of their stories has to do with collaboration and reciprocity in a format that includes the participants, and appreciates their words, values, and opinions, and the means used to express them. My own



experiences are highlighted hereafter as a means of examining my own assumptions and presenting some of my personal beliefs and intentions for this research.

#### *1.4.2 Personal experiences as a starting point for research.*

My interest in the experiences of SEOLs emerged from my own cross-cultural experiences of living, working, and travelling in Southeast Asia. I taught EFL in Korea and Japan for nearly two years, I did not speak the official languages of either country, and found myself completely alone when I first migrated to Japan in September 2001. For the first time in my life I had difficulty making friends. I was young- the youngest teacher at the school, I didn't speak Japanese, and according to my managers (two white males from other Western, primarily English-speaking countries) I didn't really speak English either, on account of my particular variety of spoken English. This critique of my dialect came in various forms, ranging from evaluations of my performance in the classroom (e.g. "In England we pronounce water as wat-*ah*, not wad-ER"), to casual social interactions in the staff room. Kubota (2002) acknowledges this pervasive view and the ways in which it manifests itself through the belief that "standard" North American and British varieties of English should provide the model for English Language Teaching (ELT) in Japan.

At work- an over-priced private English conversation school- I was trained to teach EFL according to the school's approach; a plagiarized-straight-from-the-Internet curriculum based on what I now understand to be a blatant effort to dominate students through colonialist discourse and practice. The lessons involved constant comparing and contrasting of Western cultures to Eastern cultures, and provided students with handouts

depicting countries of the world with a rating scale showing the range of communication styles from low to high context, with Americans- complete with the ten-gallon hat- topping the chart of low-context, i.e. the most straight-forward communicators. The so-called “native” teachers at the school were all White, native speakers of English, and were encouraged to act as “Western” as possible. According to my observations of one of the trainers/managers at the school, acting Western involves being obnoxious, loud, overbearing, funny, and extremely friendly at all times. While employed at the school I played the role I was paid to play. It was a constant act that made me uncomfortable, to say the least, though at that time, I didn’t have access to a vocabulary that would adequately describe my position, the school’s false advertising and manipulative recruitment strategies, or how I felt. The stereotypes and cultural boxes we established at that school are a disgrace to the profession of EFL, and are without doubt contributing to the perpetuation of cultural myths, stereotypes, and other poisonous beliefs and attitudes. As Wallace (2002) argues, "Our resistance as language teachers need not be to the teaching of the language itself so much as to the grosser kinds of cultural and linguistic imperialism which continues to characterize some ELT discourses and practices" (p. 108). This way of thinking about ELT informs my interest in the experiences of SEOLs as presented in this study.

While I eventually established a close circle of friends, and grew to appreciate aspects of Japanese culture and my life in that country, my experiences as a foreigner in Asia will have a lasting impact on my self-concepts as a language teacher and as a language learner. As a result of my experiences abroad, I am more aware of students living and studying at Memorial who must adapt to a completely new set of discourse

communities, and negotiate new perspectives and experiences in everyday life. While living in Japan, I became accustomed to my new label, “gaijin”- the word for foreigner, and “alien”- as indicated by my work permit. While *foreign* and *alien* adequately described my feeling of being on the outside, it positioned me before I was able to position myself, or find my own place in my new surroundings.

I identify with Naples (1996) in her assessment: “‘Outsiderness’ and ‘insiderness’ are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations illustrated...by the ‘outsider phenomenon’” (p. 83). While the insider/outsider dichotomy may be, in fact, a shifting location, I believe it is possible to be encouraged or forced into such a position of “outsiderness”. However, I don’t believe an identity can be wholly insider or outsider, since, according to postmodernism’s notion of nonunitary subjectivity (e.g., Bloom, 1998) individuals are fragmented and engage in a variety of identities throughout the course of daily events. Naples (1996) offers, “The bipolar construction of insider/outsider also sets up a false separation that neglects the interactive processes through which ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’ are constructed” (p. 84).

It is also important to note that the study is located within a particular social setting, and within an academic context. The circumstances of the university are important in establishing the reasons why SEOLs are actively recruited, and provide a site for exploration of the efforts made by such an institution to accommodate students from cultures beyond that of the immediate local context.

#### *1.4.3 Memorial University and SEOLs.*

The President's Report of 1995-96 acknowledged that universities across Canada, including Memorial University, were reporting trends of declining enrolment (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1996). Joe Byrne, preparing to direct the new Office of Recruitment and Promotion at that time, was quoted in Etchegary (1996) as saying, "Memorial is seeing itself as a global university rather than a provincial provider of education, which makes it appropriate to become more actively involved in aggressive recruitment efforts" (§ 2). The initiatives declared at that time included "...increasing the awareness and image of the university at the local, national and international levels" (§ 6). More recently, in April 2003, reports on recruitment at Memorial University painted a positive picture, indicating that efforts from the mid-ninety's were paying off, and despite declining enrolment within the province, an increase of 13% (approx. 400 applicants) in applications to the university was reported (Memorial University, 2003). In regard to the international student market, Malcolm (2002) indicates:

Universities in the present day have been subject to increasing pressure to reduce dependency for funding on governments, to guarantee to their stakeholders that they are quality providers, to relate their offerings to the needs of the global marketplace, to follow the example of the industry in the way in which they manage their affairs and to welcome competition from all comers....Parallel changes are taking place all over the world, and the changes are forcing universities to look beyond the boundaries of their immediate communities for partnerships, for solutions to their problems and for markets. (p. 267)

Hosoi (1996) suggests three reasons for the trend towards the recruitment of international students in countries around the world: "to give international students quality educational opportunities, to secure financial resources to maintain educational quality in times of reduced government funding, and to tell the world that the institution is alive and well" (p. 45). As indicated in a statement by Wayne Ludlow, Memorial

University's past Dean of Student Affairs, in the 1995-96 President's Report, "We want to convince those who have not yet decided to come to Memorial that this is the place to be....When they come here they will find a quality experience at a price that is lower than other institutions" (Etchegary, 1996, ¶ 4). When culturally diverse students gather within the university community, it is imperative to address the needs of those students, as well as the community in which such needs are situated. The following section attends to issues of diversity and my reasons for conducting this study.

#### *1.4.4 Discourses of diversity and the motivation for this study.*

Gee (1987) describes discourse as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'" (p. 3). Discursive practices in our society may be interpreted in any number of contexts. Each person may belong to several discourse communities, with each separate community representing a distinct facet of an individual's identities- for example, different clothing or a slight difference in vocabulary or dialect. This concept, along with my background in second-language education, is what initially fed my interest in the discourse communities at play on the campus of Memorial University. Since enrolling in the M.Ed. programme at Memorial, researching and writing about issues in the area of English language instruction, cultural issues in teaching and learning, and a sincere desire to learn more about the private and public experiences of Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language (SEOLs) have aided the formulation of questions for my thesis.

I became aware of the relevance of such issues in a letter written to the student newspaper, *The Muse* by a former classmate and international student, Kedist Chen (2003). I quickly adopted this letter as a channel for my inquiry into the experiences of SEOLs at Memorial University. While Chen is a native speaker of English, her letter points to a lack of integration and availability of support services affecting international students (many of whom are SEOLs) on Memorial University's St. John's campus. Chen maintains that upon her arrival in September 1999, "There never were any support services. And guess what- there still are none" (p. 13). While support services for international students do, in fact exist at Memorial (e.g. International Student Advisor, International Student Centre, International Student Orientation), such frustration expressed by students of Memorial University who, for some reason did not benefit from such services must be validated, and explored for the purpose of increasing awareness and improving upon existing university structures.

Burnaby (2002) concedes, "Overall, the university has [not been] moved to coordinate or support such efforts strategically in the interests of enhancing internationalization of the university as a whole" (p. 20). It is my intention to supplement previous research efforts regarding the international student population at Memorial, and research that examines support services for international students by interviewing several individuals in detail and over time, and shifting the focus from international students to SEOLs in order to promote specific awareness of linguistic issues at Memorial University. Zamel (1995) examines the experiences of faculty and English as Second Language (ESL) students, raising several key issues in the area of second language education. Specifically, Zamel acknowledges:

As we grapple with the kinds of issues and concerns raised by the clash of cultures in academia, we continue to make adjustments which, in turn, generate new questions about our practices. This ongoing dialogue is both necessary and beneficial. Like other prominent debates in higher education on reforming the canon and the implications of diversity, this attempt to explore and interrogate what we do is slowly reconfiguring the landscape and blurring the borders within what was once a fairly well-defined and stable academic community. (p. 519)

Contributing to this reformation of “canon and the implications of diversity” at Memorial is just one way I hope to utilize the narratives of participants in a way that will potentially add new ideas to the existing dialogue surrounding Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language at Memorial University.

Shifting the research focus from international students to SEOLs was arrived upon as a means of attempting to include Canadian SEOLs (e.g. First Nations, Francophone, or New Canadians), and to provide a specific linguistic focus for the purpose of university improvement for SEOL students, and awareness of related issues. President of the University of Toronto, Robert Birgeneau (2002), addresses important issues surrounding diversity at that university, asserting, “I believe that as an institution of higher education, we have an obligation to show leadership in areas where the general public may lag behind” (§ 5). This social leadership is vital to all university communities as respect and acceptance for diversity becomes a challenge for improvement. As Birgeneau maintains:

We cannot let controversy or inflexible opinions deter us from raising awareness and promoting understanding. Our campus must be an inclusive and welcoming community, and it must be so in full awareness of our religiously pluralistic environment. We can have diversity within diversity by being respectful of each other. At the same time, we can learn much more about what it is to be human by understanding humanity in all of its rich variety. In the process we can become an even greater university. (§ 5)



Learning more about the diversity on our campus can encourage plurality and respect through education and understanding. Improving the communication between SEOLs and native speakers of English is one way to encourage this process, and may be engaged through building on, and learning from previous research initiatives in this area. While previous research is vital to understanding the relevance and significance of my study, the participants are positioned at the centre of this study, and are introduced in the next section.

## 1.5 The participants

Throughout the study I present information about the participants as well as direct excerpts from interviews and journals completed for the study. Excerpts from the interviews are presented as transcribed, and barring incoherence, are quoted verbatim. Omissions made for continuity or shortening for practical purposes of relevance and ease of reading are indicated by ellipses. Likewise, journal excerpts are presented without spelling or grammar corrections. Participants reviewed all information related to them to ensure accuracy prior to submission of the thesis for publication, a practice known as member checking (discussed further in chapter three).

### 1.5.1 Liz: *"English is English"*.

Liz had been enrolled at Memorial University for just over a year at the time of the first interview. She was the only Chinese participant in the study, and expressed concerns about stereotypes and generalizations of China, and of Chinese students in particular. I knew Liz before the study commenced and we had taken a course together,

so she was familiar with my research interests. During our interviews Liz often considered various perspectives of a question in her response, as she was worried about contributing to stereotypes of Chinese students. Her reason for volunteering for the study as expressed in her journal reflected this concern:

I had the first interview with Jenn today. It was a great fun and I rarely talk so much at once. It made me think about my experiences in Canada, or, in Newfoundland, as a non-native speaker. I tried to talk about my experience as objective as possible, since I do want to contribute to her study, and most importantly, to the mutual understanding between two persons coming from two different cultures. Did I achieve objectivity? Frankly, I don't know.

As Liz points out, mutual understanding between two people from different cultures is often difficult to achieve. The main issues of cultural stereotyping, and intercultural awareness throughout Liz' interviews and journal reflections provided poignant observations that appear in chapters four and five. Liz was also clear about the role of English in her life, asserting:

I guess I am trying to say that English is English. If I never learn English, then my life will be different in the fact that I never learn English. I don't want to exaggerate the importance of English by unnecessarily relate English studying with other aspects of life. The story is different from one person to another.

Throughout the study, Liz shared with me her personal experiences as a young woman studying abroad for the first time. While she is confident about her English comprehension and writing abilities, she is concerned about the quality of her pronunciation and feels she has room to improve. Her discomfort with speaking English in public settings with native speakers is an issue that is reflected throughout her interviews and journals, and provides insight into the significance of her experiences as a SEOL.

*1.5.2 Hunter: "I have to adjust naturally, because things work different here".*

I first met Hunter, a visiting student from Germany after he'd been at Memorial University for only three months of his eight-month stay. In Germany, Hunter's degree was in North American and British Cultural Studies. He commented in the first interview that this area of study led him to MUN:

Well, I applied for a scholarship...and they...let me choose from several partner universities. Or I was allowed to choose a university in North America- a project, and that's what I did. And since I'm doing North American Cultural Studies- which in Germany basically means ah, United States Studies...sorry for you but that's the way it is- it's all about American- we talk about American music, American movies, American literature and all that stuff, and I said, well, it's time to have a look at the other country on the continent, and that's what I did. And I wanted to come to Newfoundland because this is seemingly the corner of the North American continent, which has the longest history.

Hunter's demeanour was relaxed during our interviews and his English was peppered with casual slang and obscenities, which is why I was surprised when he admitted to feeling somewhat isolated in his personal life here at Memorial University. I assumed that he would easily fit in with other students his age, however he observed:

I have a girlfriend...But um, the really cool guys I wanna hang out with don't want to hang out with me, so obviously I'm not cool enough for that (laughing). Yeah, that's a shame, but life goes on!

He also commented on adjusting in a different culture:

But yeah, I'm trying to find the middle course between adjustment and being myself. I have to adjust naturally, because things work different here.

Hunter's commentaries of his daily experiences were humorous, and his ability to consistently achieve sarcasm and humour in his second language is impressive. In his interviews and journal entries, Hunter commented on the things around him, but often

avoided discussing his personal feelings about those events. One of the main issues arising from Hunter's contributions to the study is the issue of cultural comparison. This theme is discussed in detail in chapter five.

### *1.5.3 Sylvie: "I'm not just Quebec".*

While the other participants in the study are identified only by their country or region of the world for purposes of confidentiality, Sylvie's home province of Quebec is named with her permission in order to highlight issues specific to a Canadian SEOL at Memorial University. A world traveller, Sylvie moved to this province to be close to the ocean, and for research opportunities in her field. She draws comparisons between Newfoundlanders and Quebecois, sensing that the respective cultural and geographic isolation contributes to a common sense of cultural fragility:

I think there's something very similar between Quebec people and Newfoundland people in Canada, and I think it comes from the isolation that they both ah, went through. Quebec was more of a cultural isolation, and Newfoundland is more geographical, but it's still, I think it's at the base of some form of insecurity in the general population, because I feel that in Newfoundland too, it's not an individual thing, like I talk about generality.

Sylvie's experiences of living and travelling abroad to countries like Australia and Japan have contributed to her open-minded attitude about culture and language learning. While she feels very comfortable with all aspects of English, she admits:

...learning grammar and all these things is very difficult for me because I'm very, I work a lot with my ears, when I learn a language.

I learned about Sylvie through our conversational interviews. She often reciprocated my questions, and we found that we share some common interests, including the fact that we have both lived in Japan. Sylvie's story offers a different perspective to the study from

the other participants as she is not an international student, and her Canadian citizenship necessarily influences her experiences as a SEOL at Memorial University.

*1.5.4 Khaled: “[I ordered milk] ‘cause that was the only word I knew”.*

Khaled, the only doctoral-level participant in the study, is from the Middle East, and his story is one of success in learning to speak English. He spoke of his English language learning experiences as a young boy as grammar-oriented, with little instruction in, or opportunity for oral communication in English. Khaled told me: “We study English in school, but it’s not really...I mean it’s not enough to speak...” His first experience in a foreign country was in January 2000 when he attended a university in Alberta, Canada. He remembers this experience as a shock in terms of communicating with people in English, as well as accomplishing daily tasks like buying food and ordering in restaurants. He recalls his first experiences with native English speakers with a sense of humour, highlighting that writing English well does not necessarily mean one can speak English well:

Well, like you notice now I speak English really good, but when I first came I wasn’t like this, ‘cause I never spoke and like I know how to read it, but I really don’t know how to speak it. I never spoke to anybody, so it was really difficult at the beginning, but after a while...Like I remember once...when I was coming from [home] I had to stay in London for over night. And like my government paid for the flight, they paid for me the overnight...thing, and even including meals. Yeah, so I went to eat and like I was really starving and I didn’t know what to speak because...she said what do you want, I was like, “milk” cause that was the only word I knew. She gave me this cold milk- we don’t drink cold milk back home, we have it warm right. I was like what the hell is this? I didn’t know what to say, but this is like...not panic, I just forgot...I didn’t know, I’d never spoken right. I speak in a class where like everybody is speaking my native language, right, so it’s really different. But, like I didn’t even know the names of the food right, this was the difficult part.

His experiences in English today demonstrate his improved confidence and self-efficacy in speaking his second language. Khaled is assertive in class, and as he told me:

I tend to, like, when I don't understand I tend to ask again. So I don't really feel shy if I don't understand. I just say pardon me, or I'm not a speaker, like I just say that, like I was taking a course once and I told the prof. if he can't give me the notes in advance because I don't understand what he's saying. But he was fine, he just give it to me, so...

During our interview, Khaled was friendly and, while I felt rushed because of his busy schedule, we chatted easily about his perceptions of the university and his experiences of being a SEOL in St. John's. He expressed in our interviews and in his journals that he is satisfied with his experiences to date at Memorial University, and takes advantage of services on campus, such as the campus Writing Centre, which he insisted was a service that has helped him immensely. Khaled's experiences are elaborated on in the analysis and discussion presented in chapters four and five.

#### *1.5.5 Inder: "English is like your second girlfriend".*

A second year Masters student at Memorial, Inder began his first interview by stating, "I am here to help you with your thesis," and, like all the participants in this study, his help was invaluable. Inder narrated his experiences to me with clarity, complete with geographical references and political commentary about his home country of India. He speaks clearly, but very quickly, and I often found myself asking him to repeat words or sentences.

For our first interview, we met at a public food court on campus and proceeded to my office in the Education building. Inder appeared very comfortable with the tape recorder, and even held it for the duration of the interview, turning it off when he wanted

to speak off the record. Inder's life story unfolded before me like a history lesson, and I later discovered that transcription of his interviews would prove much more time consuming than the others because of their density. The transcripts from his interviews contain lengthy soliloquies of historical context as well as social and economic conditions of his home country. Inder studied English in an immersion-type setting throughout his early education. He recalls that all school instruction was in English, and feels that this has benefited him in his life. He firmly believes that English is synonymous with access for him, and that English is the medium of communication in which everyone should be fluent:

Wherever you will go, you will come across English and English grammar.... You go for civil service examination, you go for army, you go for masters, you go for any bank examination, anything you will go, you need to come through this English stuff- letter writing, comprehension, unseen passages, anything, you have to come across this stuff. So it's like your second girlfriend. You need to know it right? So that is why everybody knows English right.

In our interviews Inder expressed many opinions about the role of English as an international language. His cultural point of reference presents a unique perspective in the sense that India has a long and complex history with colonialism and the English language. These contexts are explored further in the discussion and analysis section of the thesis.

#### *1.5.6 Jo: "Not all people are nice here like I was thinking".*

Jo's story, and her struggles with spoken English are not unfamiliar to me. As an EFL teacher in Japan, I met and taught many students who had, like Jo, studied English from a very young age, and yet continued to struggle with speaking English. I do not acknowledge the familiarity of her story to corroborate a stereotype of Asian students,



and in fact acknowledge that Jo's story allowed me to reflect on my personal lack of success as a French language learner in the core French curriculum throughout my education in rural Newfoundland. While I have been far less successful than Jo, I can empathize with the outcomes of learning in a grammar-dominated curriculum, and the frustrations of feeling competent in writing a language without achieving the satisfaction of communicating equally well in that language.

From a large, densely populated city in Thailand, Jo was happy to leave her home country for the first time to come to Memorial University in September 2002. On the recommendation of a friend, Jo temporarily set aside her dream of studying architecture to pursue a degree in an area of science at Memorial University. I first met Jo through the ESL department's conversation partner programme, in which I was partnered with a friend of hers in 2001. At the university's Multicultural Night in Fall 2003, a mutual friend of Jo's home country re-introduced us, and told Jo about my research. Without even asking her, Jo volunteered to participate. Not yet ready to recruit participants I thanked her, and told her I would be in touch when my research began. When my announcement was posted to the International Student Listserv (see Appendix B), Jo promptly contacted me and volunteered to participate.

In our first interview when we were getting to know each other, Jo was consistently positive and somewhat vague about her impressions of living in a new culture and speaking English in an academic community. Subsequently, however, in one of her journal entries Jo related the following experience:

Not all people here are nice like I was thinking. I went to Wal-Mart this afternoon to pick up my photos from the shop. I went there with my friend who I think her english is pretty ok. Also my english is not that bad too. We asked for [our] photos from one woman in the shop. She seemed to be moody and looked like she

did not understand what we wanted. Then she disappeared for a while and came back to tell us that it hasn't been done yet (It was supposed to be done since Tuesday!!) so she told us to come back again in 10 minutes without saying sorry. We went for shopping and came back again 30 minutes later. She still looked moody. She gave us our photos. We left from that shop and I started to check the bill. She over charged us!! This time I went back to complain. Fortunately, she had gone and the lady who served me was very nice. She say sorry and gave me 50% discount.

Jo's participation in the study seemed to develop throughout the six months, reaching a point where I felt that she trusted me with experiences that were hurtful and frustrating for her as a SEOL and as an international student. This, as well as other experiences of Jo's are discussed further in chapters four and five.

These excerpts and brief characterizations are intended to present a snapshot of each participant as an orientating mechanism. They are not intended to personify the characters of these individuals, as even after six month of interviews, email correspondence, reading the students' personal journals, and analyzing their contributions, I cannot even say that I know them well enough to provide such a comprehensive description at this point. Participants' journal entries and responses are presented later in the thesis, and will allow readers to form a more accurate portrait of the participants and their experiences as told to me. The following section discusses the significance of the study, and its attempt to fill the gaps where previous literature failed to involve the students themselves as experts in this field of research. The issues raised in this study form the foundation for the discussion, and have greatly informed the study in ways that I- as a native speaker of English- would not have been able to accurately generate.

## 1.6 Significance of the study

This study is expected to inform areas not yet explored at Memorial University with respect to SEOLs. While results are not intended for generalization, the study contributes to an understanding of the experiences of SEOLs attending Canadian universities, in particular, those universities with comparable campus populations, structures, and resources. In addition, existing research at Memorial University tends to focus on international students (see Burnaby, 2002; Koenderman, 2000; Parsons, 2000; Carley, 1998), thus for the most part neglecting issues pertaining to Canadian SEOLs.

This research attempts to address these issues by concentrating on personal narratives of a small, diverse sample of SEOLs at Memorial University. In focusing on the (socio-)linguistic aspects of SEOLs experiences, it is hoped that the resulting data will offer a new perspective to complement existing research relating to international students at Memorial University. Methodologically, employing student interviews and journals to explore the experiences of SEOLs at Memorial University has not yet been utilized, but interviewing international students at this university has been recommended in previous studies (Burnaby, 2002; Parsons, 2000), and has been employed effectively elsewhere in other research in the areas of second language learning (e.g., Wang, 1999; Leki & Carson, 1997), and the experiences of SEOLs and their teachers (e.g., Casanave, 2002; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Zamel, 1995), thus demonstrating the need for such an approach to complement existing studies at this university in particular.

## 1.7 Conclusion

The recruitment of international students is important to the financial stability of the university, as well as to the multiplicity and diversity of the community, both on and off campus. Satisfaction and subsequent retention of international students involves a complex series of issues (see Parsons, 2000). Linguistic diversity pertains not only to international students, but also Canadian Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language, a category that includes Francophone, Aboriginal, or immigrant students in addition to international students. Daily experiences of such students must be addressed in order to 1) uncover pertinent issues that have perhaps been neglected; 2) to support previous research; or 3) to expand and build on the canon surrounding SEOLs at Memorial University. In this chapter I have introduced these issues as the purpose of my study, and provided a brief background of previous research conducted in this vein. Participant profiles are also included in this chapter as an introduction to their stories. The next chapter presents related literature on language, culture, and the university's role in addressing the needs of SEOLs. A postmodern critique of models of cross-cultural adjustment is provided as a means to explore important constructs of language learning relevant to this study.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline literature in the area of language learning, particularly those studies that focus on the experiences of Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language (SEOLs) who are living, working, or studying in English. Particular attention will be given to the methodologies, research questions, and results of the studies, as well as the ways in which this study is similar or dissimilar to those reviewed. The particular concepts explored in regard to specific language learning issues (e.g. academic experiences, cross-cultural adjustment, student services, the intersection of language and culture) were simultaneously informed by the participants' narratives and the review of related literature. Because of this iterative process, themes of importance were constantly reevaluated and the related sources reconsidered. Theories from the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are presented to provide opportunities for furthering the dialogue surrounding issues of acculturation, motivation, and investment in language learning. Sources deemed integral to the development of the thesis are presented in detail in this chapter, and the contribution of this study is described.

### 2.2 Exploring the experiences of SEOLs in academia

When I first started inquiring into the issue of SEOLs in higher education, I sought out professors and experienced teachers in related areas, and was somewhat unnerved by the barrage of questions I received. I had developed the title of my study very early on, so everyone wanted to know, "What *kinds* of experiences?", "*Whose*

experiences?”, “How can you generalize about the experiences of *only six* students?” and so on. Desperate to defend my ideas and my interest in experiences *according to SEOLs*, rather than predetermined issues, these questions led me on a series of interrelated routes, and sometimes off into other areas that were beyond the scope of my research at this stage, such as my desire to conduct further research through ethnography and life history methodologies. One important development that emerged from this investigation, whether directly relevant or not, was the relative clarity I gleaned from refining my intentions, and learning from other research how to better articulate my goals. This brings me to two fundamental resources for this study, which are: Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notions of *communities of practice* and *legitimate peripheral participation*; and Bourdieu’s (1977a, 1977b) conceptions of *legitimate discourse* and *symbolic capital*.

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe a *community of practice* as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). Also important to this definition, is the authors’ assertion that “Hegemony over resources for learning and alienation from full participation are inherent in the shaping of the legitimacy and peripherality of the participation in its historical realizations” (p. 42). The author’s notion of *legitimate peripheral participation* is useful in its “composite character” (p. 35). That is, the authors maintain the concept is useful only as a whole in the sense that “legitimate” is a prerequisite for participation in the group, and “peripheral”- as opposed to central- viewed in a positive sense better represents the complex nature of one’s participation because it is in flux (p. 35). Power relations can influence degrees of legitimate peripherality, but the *activity* itself is central, thereby positioning participants

peripherally. In this study Lave and Wenger's work provides an important perspective on the ways participation manifests itself in communities of practice, specifically in the social and academic communities of Memorial University.

*Legitimate discourse*, a concept developed by Bourdieu (1977a) is elucidated effectively in Norton Peirce (1993):

Bourdieu argues that there are four characteristics which legitimate discourse must fulfil [sic]. First, it must be uttered by an appropriate speaker, as opposed to an "imposter": Only a priest, for example, would be authorized to use religious language. Second, it must be uttered in a legitimate situation: Wedding vows, for example would only be appropriate in a marriage ceremony. Third, it must be addressed to legitimate receivers: A young child, for example, would not be a legitimate receiver of an academic lecture. Fourth, it must be formulated in legitimate phonological and syntactic forms. (p. 198)

Legitimate discourse informs this study in its acknowledgement of legitimation in particular discourse communities. It highlights the role of the speaker *in relation to* the receiver(s), and at the same time raises important issues as to the characteristics that contribute to one's legitimacy as a speaker. These issues were crucial in the early development of my thesis, and helped me to achieve a better sense of the situated nature of language learning, and significant factors that affect and often complicate the act of speaking. Some of the literature on the educational experiences of language learners provides a variety of perspectives, methods, and epistemologies to guide my study of SEOLs.

Bourdieu's (1977b) theory of *symbolic power* offers insight into the interactions between SEOLs and native speakers of English in its assertion that, "...any language that can command attention is an 'authorized language', invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated" (p. 170). This concept is particularly useful in this context because of its

critical view of power relations, and its emphasis on the relationship between language and experience. Bourdieu's (1977b) work on *symbolic power* also informs this study in its view of domination and orthodoxy. Bourdieu explains orthodoxy:

...is defined as a system of euphemisms, of acceptable ways of thinking and speaking the natural and social world, which rejects heretical remarks as blasphemies. But the manifest censorship imposed by orthodox discourse, the official way of speaking and thinking the world, conceals another, more radical censorship: the overt opposition between 'right' opinion and 'left' or 'wrong' opinion, which delimits the *universe of possible discourse*, be it legitimate or illegitimate, euphemistic or blasphemous, masks in its turn the fundamental opposition between the universe of things that can be stated, and hence thought, and the universe of that which is taken for granted. (pp. 169-170, emphasis in original).

Derived from a context of classism, Bourdieu's assertion that the dominant classes control, to some degree, the *universe of possible discourse* may be extended to dominant speakers of English, that is, native speakers of English in the context of globalization and world Englishes, an issue discussed further in chapter four. This notion of the dominated versus the dominant reflects the power struggle that exists amongst speakers of different varieties of English, and illustrates the symbolic nature of English through its commodification as a global or international language.

While much of the research on the academic experiences of SEOLs (namely international, English as an Other Language, or immigrant students) is conducted within a quantitative paradigm, and often focuses on recruitment, retention, and other institutional-centered concerns (e.g., Parsons, 2000; Leki & Carson, 1994; Mickle, 1984), qualitative studies provide a much-needed focus on the students' perspectives, and can afford the opportunity for their voices to be heard. Mongillo's (1995) rationale for conducting a qualitative study on the experiences of Chinese students in Ontario universities maintains that quantitative research on international students has contributed



little depth in the development of an understanding of the participants' needs. Research initiatives aimed at correcting this lack of depth are included in this section, with studies by Sanner, Wilson, and Samson (2002), Casanave, (2002), and a multi-method study by Leki and Carson (1997). These studies focus on the experiences of students in different levels and fields within academic contexts.

In their qualitative study entitled: *The Experiences of International Nursing Students in a Baccalaureate Nursing Program*, researchers Sanner, Wilson, and Samson (2002) aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of eight female nursing students from Nigeria through the use of a one-hour long, guided telephone interview. The interviews were comprised of eight open-ended questions to allow some freedom of sequence, while retaining the critical topics and issues deemed important to cover with each participant. Two research questions were posited: 1) "how do international students describe their experiences in their nursing program?" and 2) "what adjustment problems do international students face in the nursing program?" (p. 206). Theme-emergent analysis using a computer software program revealed three major themes: "social isolation, resolved attitudes, and persistence despite perceived obstacles" (p. 206). Contributing factors, or sub themes of these categories offer insight into possible contexts of the highlighted experiences, and provide a model for future work in this area of study. The researchers recommend conducting the study with other populations of ESL international students. This study informed my research both in the phrasing of the research questions (similarly worded, open-ended questions were used in my study as well, see Appendix E), and in the interview method. While a similar guided interview process was used for my study, interviews were conducted face to face and via email, and

included three sessions as a means of providing a more holistic view of the participants' lives and daily experiences.

In another study of the experiences of second language learners at the university level, Casanave (2002) presents five case studies of masters students studying in the area of second language education, emphasizing, "published case studies of academic enculturation at the masters level are sparse" (p. 84). As my study also explores the experiences of master's students whose first language is not English, I was interested in this study on many levels, including epistemologically and methodologically.

Two female participants in Casanave's study were from Japan, two were White Americans, and one was from Armenia. Participants were interviewed seven-times, most of the interviews were face to face, while one was text-based. Each interview was composed of open-ended questions, and each focused on a different aspect of academic writing and personal perspectives as learners in a particular learning community. The author's representation of identity in communities of practice is representative of the postmodern notion of nonunitary subjectivity:

Identities are not fixed, in other words, but constantly being reconstructed and negotiated through different practices and modes of belonging. For my purposes in academic settings, I view people's identities as continually in the process of being constructed as the members of academic communities learn to engage in different sets of practices and envision themselves on different possible trajectories. Students, teachers, and researchers all come to an academic setting with a history, with a more or less well-defined sense of where they want to go, and with opportunities to engage in practices that define them as members of the school community and perhaps also as emergent or expert members of a disciplinary or rhetorical community. (p. 23)

In her study, Casanave attempts to explore the transition from an academic community to a professional one. She acknowledges that the small sample size does not

allow for generalizability to other populations, and posits numerous questions yet to be addressed before such a generalization may be arrived upon:

A generalized model of writing if applied to the masters level case studies discussed in this [study] will mischaracterize graduate level academic writing by failing to take into account the multiplicity of genres and subgenres, the social and political aspects of learning to participate in the literate practices of specialized communities in local settings, and the influence of teacher and student personalities on the demands and expectations within particular programs. (p. 132)

Casanave supports her decision to avoid coming to specific conclusions based on her findings, asserting: “I remain committed to the perhaps less ambitious goal of forging connections between case studies and the consumers of case studies- people who read books like this one and wonder how the stories in them apply to their own lives” (p. 132). The presentation of this study was helpful in my work, as it allowed me to wrestle with important concerns such as generalizability and audience, which I have approached from a so-called “non-traditional” view. Knowing that professionals in the field would assess my study, I used Casanave’s experience and substantiated justification for somewhat ambiguous decisions as a guide for my own work.

In a related study by Leki and Carson (1997), the researchers emphasize the importance of exploring the experiences of students both during and after their EAP (English for Academic Purposes) writing courses. Building on an earlier survey of ESL students in the U.S. (see Leki & Carson, 1994), the authors present a dual-phase study elaborating on the findings of previous work. In the first phase, 27 students (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels) were first interviewed about two writing assignments at the beginning of the semester. In phase two, near the end of the semester, 21 undergraduate and graduate students were surveyed, and interviewed about a different

type of specific writing experience. The results of the study provided insight into pedagogical strategies that may be implemented to improve learning in EAP courses. The authors maintain, “As described by the students in this study, what is valued in writing for writing classes is different from what is valued in writing for other academic courses” (p. 64).

In my study, I have focused on the academic experiences of SEOLs, particularly in regard to their language learning experiences. The methodology, interview guides, and data analysis techniques presented in Leki and Carson (1997) were particularly helpful in guiding the design of my first study. Their use of open-ended interviews was supported with the guiding questions used in the study. Their questions helped me in creating interview guides for this study. In addition, the researchers planned multiple interviews to afford participants an opportunity to address the three types of writing considered in their study, “because students do not typically experience these writing conditions simultaneously” (p. 45). This informed my study which included three interview sessions. Finally, I drew from Leki and Carson’s study in my analysis of the interview and journal data. Their study draws on ethnographic and qualitative techniques for analysis, including coding the transcripts for “recurrent themes and comments made salient by their relevance to the research question, their vehemence, or their potential to elicit information in subsequent interviews” (p. 48). As a novice researcher it helped me immensely to find a study similar in purpose to mine that utilized the analytical procedures I had been reading about in research guides and handbooks (e.g., Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In his study entitled, *Discourse Community, Legitimate Peripheral Participation, and the Nonnative-English-Speaking-Scholar*, Flowerdew (2000) reports on a single case study of a nonnative-English-speaking scholar's attempt to publish an academic paper in an English journal. The participant had completed doctoral studies in the United States and subsequently returned to his home country of China. The study lasted for several months and took place in Hong Kong. Drawing primarily on Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of legitimate peripheral participation, and Swales' (1990) concept of discourse communities, Flowerdew finds that while the participant was successful in publishing his paper, he had to overcome numerous challenges, including the tendency for reviewers to critique or reject the paper, and their frequent use of the label Nonnative Speaker (NNS). Flowerdew highlights the problematic nature of such terms as Native Speaker (NS) and NNS as they "mark two ends of a continuum that mask a whole range of language competencies" (p. 146). The author maintains that "Nonstandard language needs to be pointed out to all contributors, but this can be done without distinguishing between NSs and NNSs. Flowerdew's study is a useful guide for the application of the concept legitimate peripheral participation in research. His critical approach informs my study in that it provides a view of some of the ethnocentric practices prevalent in academic communities. His problematization of the NS and NNS construct is also informative, and this is reflected in the naming of Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language in this study.

The studies reviewed in this section focus on the academic experiences of SEOLs. Because the context of my study is centered on student SEOLs at one particular university campus, it is important to review such studies. In addition, the nature of the

experiences of SEOLs are necessarily related to their language learning experiences. All of the participants in this study have had experience with learning English in formal academic situations, therefore, providing a background of academic practices and the nature of academic communities is necessary to establish a basis for this study. The next section concentrates on cross-cultural adjustment and acculturation of language learners, and provides a critique of some of the theories of adjustment and acculturation.

### 2.3 Cross-cultural adjustment

This section begins with consideration of the cultural context in which this study is situated. While Newfoundland can, in some ways, be viewed as a province with a rich history of diversity, the current reality for SEOLs may not include recognition of this diversity due to its overwhelmingly European make-up. Related literature in the area of cross-cultural adjustment is reviewed, and includes elements of quantitative, qualitative, and critical research on this topic. Theories of acculturation in SLA are presented for the purpose of evolving an adequate conceptualization of cross-cultural adjustment for this study.

A common observation of newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador finds the province relatively homogeneous in regard to the race and language of its population. Looking about informally at the faces of residents in St. John's, and listening to their conversations, while extremely problematic, can provide an at-a-glance portrait of the cultural and racial composition of the province. Researchers have commented on the province's "remarkable uniformity in its population with respect to race, ethnicity,

language and so on” (Burnaby, 2002, p. 6). In respect to this perceived homogeneity, Burnaby notes:

In this province only 0.7% reported themselves in 1996 as members of visible minority populations while the figure was 11% for the whole of the country. In Newfoundland and Labrador only 1% of the population reported having a mother tongue other than English or French, while in the rest of the country 16% reported a non-official language as a mother tongue. (p. 7)

Burnaby offers that this information indicates a particular need for specific curricular measures to be taken in order to promote cultural awareness amongst the student population, as well as the need to encourage measures within the university as a whole. With this in mind, adjustment itself is a complex, and presumably challenging experience for SEOLs. The following section details studies focusing on cross-cultural adaptation of students by Mongillo (1995), Mickle (1984), and Boonyawiroj (1982), and further qualifies adaptation through reference to Klein (1977), Foust, Fieg, Koester, Sarbaugh, and Wendinger (1981, cited in Mongillo), and Guilherme (2002). Acculturation theories are also examined and critiqued in order to provide the grounds for a critical view of cross-cultural adjustment.

In her qualitative study, *Beyond the Winter Coat: Adjustment Experiences of Graduate Students From the People's Republic of China*, Mongillo (1995) explores the adjustment experiences of ten graduate students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) attending McGill University. The participants were interviewed using both semi-structured and open-ended formats. Additionally, Mongillo conducted structured interviews with administration at the university, which contributed vital background information to her study. Investigating factors such as social involvement, challenges and access to interaction, as well as communication between students and their professors,

this study focuses on communications and culture, and the intersections of these aspects in the adjustment of participants. Mongillo (1995) found that international students face particular challenges with regard to adjustment in Canadian universities, and these students acknowledge self-reliance and comfort with uncertainty in their futures as key factors in their adjustment. From a gender-based perspective, women participants located independence and freedom as issues that may conflict with their traditional upbringing or social roles.

A quantitative approach to cross-cultural adaptation is presented in Mickle's (1984) study entitled: *The Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Hong Kong Students at two Ontario Universities*. This study aimed to define successful adaptation of students from Hong Kong. A questionnaire was used to survey 187 undergraduate students with visas at York University and University of Toronto in Ontario, with 48 of those surveyed attending ESL classes at the universities. Students reported on their satisfaction with their English speaking proficiency, as well as difficulties and challenges faced during their stay. Adaptation was measured according to these self-ratings. In addition to the quantitative data, a series of follow-up interviews with 15 student volunteers was conducted. Two of these participants' stories are presented as case studies, as a means to better understand the results of the questionnaire. Results of the study indicate a positive correlation between social contacts (i.e., number of Canadian friends), involvement in activities with Canadians, and extended periods of stay in the country. The study also reveals that key indicators of adaptation include length of stay in the country and perceived discrimination.



Another study focusing on the adjustment experiences of foreign students in Canada, Boonyawiroj (1982) presents nine case studies of foreign graduate students from a diverse range of countries. Boonyawiroj takes a qualitative approach to exploring participants' experiences. Utilizing a semi-structured interview format, sessions extended over a seven-month period, with each participant attending at least three interviews. Interviews were transcribed, analyzed through constant comparison, which, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) is a form of triangulation. They explain that in this method of analysis, "data are compared across a range of situations, times, groups of people, and through a range of methods" (p. 151). Transcripts in this study were returned to participants for member checking, a procedure that "consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm credibility of the information and narrative accounts" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 27).

Findings were divided into academic and personal categories. Language was found to be a major challenge amongst participants in the academic category, in addition to identity and role shifting, and lack of awareness of university policies. Participants also cited support from groups, positive attitude, academic success, and learning strategies as facilitators of adjustment. On a personal level, students admitted to feeling lonely and homesick as a major difficulty, as well as establishing relationships with Canadians. Factors indicated as integral to personal adjustment include more pre-entry information, support groups, and cultural awareness of the host country.

Another study of the experiences of language learners in Canada was conducted by Norton Peirce (1993), entitled, *Language Learning, Social Identity and Immigrant Women*. Norton Peirce explored the opportunities for immigrant women to practice ESL

outside of their classrooms, and the interaction of the participants with their social surroundings and the socially structured opportunities available to them as immigrants. The researcher examines the notions of motivation and acculturation, and raises important questions as to power relations, social identity, and the assumptions upon which theories in second language acquisition (SLA) research are based. The study involved five immigrant women, who Norton Peirce personally invited to participate in the research. Data was gathered through personal interviews, a diary study, questionnaires, and written essays, in addition to the researcher's own journal. Important conclusions from this study include the use of Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of legitimate discourse to argue that "the learning of a second language is not simply a skill that is acquired with hard work and dedication, like driving a car or operating a machine. It is a complex social practice that engages the social identities of language learners in ways that have received little attention in the field of Second Language Acquisition" (Norton Peirce, 1993, pp. 200-1). This study has informed my research in this conception of learning as a social practice, and I, too, have included Bourdieu in my analysis as a means of questioning the participants' legitimacy or perceived legitimacy as speakers of English.

Research from earlier periods also addresses the issue of adaptation. Klein (1977) identifies four patterns of adjustment including: 1) instrumental adjustment- characterized by minimal adjustment difficulties, 2) identification- viewed when active participation in the host country leads to positive associations and attitudes regarding that country, and may include readjustment difficulties when one returns to their home country, 3) withdrawal- evidenced by negative attitudes towards the host culture, and strong

identification with one's home culture, and 4) resistance- characterized by resistance to the host culture, maintenance of values and beliefs, and minimal change in identity. While this view denies postmodern views of multiple subjectivities, and tends to oversimplify the nature of adjustment, it does represent a range of responses to adjustment in a new country, and a new culture, or cultures.

The Acculturation Model has been perhaps the best-known and most influential way of understanding the role of culture in second language acquisition. While the model has limitations, especially in EFL contexts, as opposed to ESL, the following presents the work of prominent theorists in this area, particularly Schumann (1978) and Brown (1980, 1987). This discussion is followed by more recent extensions and implicit or explicit critiques of the model, such as those of Archibald & Libben (1995), van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, van Os & Janssen-van Dielen (1984), Zamel (1997) and Norton Peirce (1995). Because of the close links between language and culture, this model has had considerable impact on the fields of applied linguistics and second language acquisition. According to the Acculturation Model, language learning is inextricably tied to the learner's affective response to the culture(s) associated with the target language. Gardner & Lambert (1972), in their pivotal study of motivation and language learning, found that intrinsically motivated learners who wished "to learn more about the other cultural community... in an open-minded way, to the point of eventually being accepted as... member[s] of that other group" (p. 3) were likely to be more effective language learners. Stauble (1980) also supports the view that the success of language learners depends on "the degree to which they acculturate to the target language group".

According to Schumann (1978), success in second language acquisition will depend on “the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group” (p. 34). This, in turn, is determined by the degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the culture of the target language. A learner who has little social contact with native speakers, or who is less interested in their culture, would be seen as unlikely to learn the language effectively because linguistic input will be limited. In Schumann's view, if social distance did not accurately predict the learning outcome, then psychological distance had to be taken into account. The latter would probably be much more relevant in the case of EFL, where learners, by definition, have little exposure to native speakers. Here the learners' individual attitudes are much more likely to limit the amount of language intake.

Brown (1980) argued that we cannot understand second language acquisition without also studying the process of adapting to a second culture (p. 129). In his model of cultural learning, there are four stages: euphoria, culture shock, anomie and recovery. In the first stage, euphoria, the learner is likely to think of the new culture as generally wonderful. However, after more prolonged exposure to the culture, a shift occurs and the learner begins to find many aspects of the new culture baffling, frustrating and even annoying. In the third stage, anomie, the learner begins to feel as though he or she belongs to neither culture. Finally, if the learner perseveres, he or she may reach the stage of recovery where, in contrast to the previous stage, he or she is very much at home in both cultures.

The original acculturation model is somewhat rigid, as is typical of early versions of new theories. Coelho (1998) suggests that people do not all pass through stages at the

same rate and that some may skip a stage altogether. For some people, stages may overlap, and still others may remain “stuck” at one stage indefinitely. Thus it is important not to over generalize. For example, while first impressions may include excitement, a sense of adventure and even euphoria, they may also be confusing and intimidating. Later on, assimilation, rather than acculturation, may be the final stage for some people. If this is the case, according to Coelho, language learners may even go so far as to “re-create their identities” (p. 29) and actually discard their original culture and language. However, this is not necessarily desirable and may lead to “a negative adaptive value” indicating “an incomplete process of adaptation” (Freire, 1989, p. 3, cited in Coelho). Genuine acculturation would be a healthier response to exposure to a new language and culture. It would involve “acceptance of the new culture in a more integrated way... adopting some of the values and practices of the new culture while maintaining some aspects of the original culture” (Coelho, p. 29). This can be highly productive behaviour, leading to flexibility, open-mindedness and sensitivity to cultural diversity.

It must be noted that, while the Acculturation Model has had considerable influence, a number of writers are critical of the model and newer research has had quite different findings. Archibald and Libben (1995), for example, suggest that a weakness of the model is that it does not provide clear explanations of all aspects of social and psychological distance. Nor is it especially applicable in many foreign language or classroom based contexts where there is often little or no cultural contact. However, they conclude that the model is helpful in its highlighting of the social context of language learning and in re-focusing our attention not so much on how learners acquire language as on why they do. The insight that different learners will have different learning

outcomes depending on their psychological make-up and social situations is a crucial one for the field of applied linguistics. Another critique of the model comes from van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, van Os and Janssen-van Dieten (1984). In a summary of the literature on instrumental and integrative motivation in language learning, they point out that research in post-colonial contexts such as the Philippines, India and Israel has had quite different findings from those of Gardner and Lambert (1972). In several of the studies they discuss, it was found that an instrumental motivation seemed to be more effective in language learning than an integrative one. Other theorists of cultural aspects of language learning have proposed models that acknowledge the complexities of culture. Zamel (1997) argues that aspects of identity other than culture (such as race, gender, age and social class) are just as likely to play key roles in how individuals learn languages. In addition, she reminds us that cultures are not unified but multiple and shifting, and that performance in the L2 is greatly contingent on specific situations. For these reasons, Zamel suggests that the field should replace 'reductive ideas about... acculturation and move towards a model of "transculturation" which would recognize that culture is "highly unpredictable, 'elusive', even chaotic" (p. 350). Transculturation would involve an active, dynamic engagement and resistance on the part of the learner rather than Brown's more simplistic four-stage process of moving from one homogeneous culture to another.

In a study of immigrant women learning English in Canada, Norton Peirce (1995) also offers a re-exploration of social identity and the language learning context in which she argues that "the individual language learner is not ahistorical and unidimensional but has a complex and sometimes contradictory social identity, changing across time and

space” (pp. 25-26). These more recent theorists, then, both critique and build on the earlier work in acculturation which originally recognized the central role culture plays in coming to truly understand and master a second language. van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, van Os and Janssen-van Dielen's (1984) criticisms notwithstanding, today's conditions of open borders and globalization make understanding of other cultural groups a necessary part of language learning. It would seem more vital than ever for language students to develop a high degree of intercultural understanding as well as simply acquiring basic linguistic proficiency. At the same time, the more complex models of Zamel (1997) and Norton Peirce (1995), highlighting contradictions and resistance as well as engagement and empathy, direct us towards a richer understanding of cultural aspects of language learning.

Moving towards a working definition of cultural adjustment, I turn to Foust, Fieg, Koester, Sarbaugh, and Wendinger (1981, p. 7, cited in Mongillo), who propose:

In cross-cultural adjustment one is concerned with the changes in thinking and behavior required when moving from one cultural milieu to another. The nature of the adjustment required depends on the nature of the differences between the original and the new culture and on the objectives the sojourner seeks to complete in the new culture. (p. 15)

To expand this definition, issues of power and identity are considered: “An intercultural encounter does not take place in a vacuum where two autonomous and fixed cultural identities establish a straight and direct line of communication” (Guilherme, 2002, p. 155). Viewing the process of cross-cultural adjustment through a critical lens, the issue of power relations cannot be ignored. Furthermore:

Critical intercultural learning involves more than experiencing, interpreting, and accommodating to other cultures, it entails making connections, exploring articulations, and changing representations. Therefore, it has profound implications for the way students construct their cultural identities and,

consequently, for the way they respond to their everyday lives. (Guilherme, 2002, p. 158)

In my personal life, I have adopted elements of critical theory from critical pedagogists like Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux as a means of “reading both the word and the world” (Guilherme, 2002, p. 159). Such processes of exploration, interpretation, and representation are important to me as a researcher, and this expanded notion of adaptation is provided as a guide to my own cultural awareness, as well as a guide to facilitate the analysis of the adaptation of participants in this study.

#### 2.4 Student services for SEOLs

This section introduces some of the literature on international students, and provides a more institution-focused view of available support for SEOLs in the Canadian context, and primarily at Memorial University. The university has revealed intentions to increase international student recruitment (see Memorial University, 2000; 1996), and models of multiculturalism in higher education (e.g., Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000) can contribute to the success of these initiatives. Incorporating multicultural and inter-cultural practices in higher education is becoming more attractive to institutions wishing to increase international student enrolment, and according to Baxter Magolda (2003):

Although intellectual growth and career preparation are the core focus of higher education, most campuses have additional expectations for functioning in the campus community. One of the most challenging expectations is appreciation of diversity or intercultural competence. Educators want students to understand their own cultural heritage, learn about other cultures, move away from ethnocentric perspectives, and work interdependently with people different from themselves. (pp. 232-3)

Burnaby (2002) reports on services for international students at Memorial University following several initiatives by the university to increase the enrolment of



international students (see Blake, 2001). The purpose of Burnaby's report, entitled *Where the rubber hits the road: Services for international students at Memorial University of Newfoundland*, was to provide a description of the current services available to international students at the University as situated within various contexts of geography, population, the local and provincial communities, university policies, and other relevant background information. Also presented in the report are the findings of a study conducted regarding international student services, and recommendations for future development in this area.

Burnaby's (2002) report relied on related literature and interviews with key players in the area of internationalization of the university, such as administration and faculty at MUN as well as other universities, participants from the community, as well as from NGO's. Data in this study were analyzed through constant comparison, and negative case analyses. Searching for negative, or disconfirming evidence in data is seen as a form of methodological triangulation, and is described by Creswell and Miller (2000) as, "the process where investigators first establish the preliminary themes or categories in a study and then search through the data for evidence that is consistent with or disconfirms these themes" (p. 27). Findings in Burnaby's report revealed a general lack of integration of international student services within the university. While some divisions of the university seem to have take pro-active steps towards improvement for international support services, Burnaby maintains, "It is not possible to judge with any accuracy the quality of the centrally supported services for international students; however, the volume of work seems to have reached or exceeded the capacity of employees to deal with it in some areas" (p. 36).

Parsons' (2000) study, *Retaining international students: Identifying the needs of international students attending Memorial University of Newfoundland* evaluates the needs of first time international students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Parsons' purpose was to inform the university of the needs of international students, and to suggest improvements to the existing support services. Taking a quantitative approach, a sixty-five-item questionnaire addressing academic, social, cultural, financial, and basic living needs, in addition to issues of recruitment and retention was completed and returned by 65 participants. Parsons focused on a comparative analysis between undergraduate and graduate level students, and findings noted that needs of both groups were similar.

Some issues raised by the participants include having more information before leaving to study in a foreign country; being welcomed at the airport; receiving more orientation and support from social contacts; and provision of housing assistance. Additionally, academic needs in the areas of writing and speaking, as well as the lack of employment opportunities were important issues detailed in the study. In terms of language needs of the students, Parsons (2000) maintains the necessity of, "academic English and study skills programs focusing on the needs of international students" as well as, "specialized assistance and bridging programs...to help international students learn how to effectively function in the academic environment" (p. 107). Parsons also recommends numerous improvements to elevate current available support services for international students. She highlights the importance of increased effort from all members of the university community, including Canadian students who can greatly improve the social conditions for international students by helping them feel at home at MUN.

Additionally, Parsons suggests efforts must be made in improving both pre-entry and entry needs of international students, and provides specific suggestions as to how this may be achieved.

Related to Parsons' (2000) study of the needs of international students at a Canadian university, Calderwood (1993) approaches her study entitled *International students at Alberta universities: Perceptions and levels of satisfaction*, with a primarily quantitative paradigm in the context of institutional support and assistance. In the study 131 questionnaires were analyzed from the sample of both undergraduate and graduate students at the Universities of Lethbridge, Calgary, and Alberta. Questionnaires contained 32 questions on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). Some of the topics covered include arrival and orientation to Canada, English proficiency, housing, and academic support. Thirteen additional questions supplemented data from the Likert ratings, and 32 of the follow-up interviews were analyzed. Findings of the study reveal 52.5%, or 68 of the participants indicated satisfaction in regard to the support and assistance received in the university and the community at large.

The literature presented above provides different perspectives on the ways in which international students have been contacted for research purposes at this university in the past and one related study of other Canadian universities. One of the contributions of my study to the body of literature at Memorial University lies in its utilization of a different methodological approach. While methodology is addressed in depth in chapter three, the next section outlines the ways epistemology and methodology can enhance my study of SEOLs at Memorial University.

## 2.5 Feminism and Postmodernism in cross-cultural research

As Reinharz (1992) contends in her extensive analysis of feminist research methods, “Instead of orthodoxy, feminist research practices must be recognized as a plurality” (p. 4). As a feminist, I have aimed to include methods utilized in the research of other, like-minded feminists, such as Bloom (1998), who studied personal narratives of two female educators, and attempted to introduce a research relationship of reciprocity and dialogue with them. I also attempted to utilize the feminist methodology of a conversational approach to interviewing. Hoping to engage participants in earnest and heartfelt dialogue, I informed all participants of my desire to create an atmosphere of sharing. Rather than expect an actual interview, I asked them to try to view the process as a shared dialogue where they could ask me questions, and we could discuss a variety of issues, whether either of us could see the applicability or relevance to the study or not. As Reinharz (1992) offers, “The conversation format nicely illustrates how knowledge is socially constructed, tentative, and emergent. A conversation is different from an interview with its division of labor between the party who asks questions, and the other who answers” (pp. 230-1).

Ultimately, I, like Bloom (1998) encountered challenges with this approach, as participants all came to the sessions with very specific expectations as to exactly what an interview should entail. Awkward silences surfaced where I resisted jumping to the next question in an attempt to encourage “natural” dialogue. Some participants requested that I just ask them questions and they would answer, and one participant even took my silence as an indication the interview was over, practically jumping out of their seat to leave. With this in mind, it is difficult to say whether my research can be classified as feminist

or not. Are feminist intentions enough? Reinharz (1992) highlights the constant evolution of research under the feminist label, and the wide-ranging possibilities for feminist research from positivist to qualitative and original methods. Of the interview process Reinharz maintains, "In my view, the emerging norm of self-reflexive reporting of the interview process and the experiments in exact reproduction of people's speech are steps in the right direction" (p. 45). Reviewing *Feminist Research Ethics: A Process* (The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1996), the researchers caution, "Our own experiences suggest that we should name and discuss as many assumptions as possible, including definitions of terms, ethical considerations, project goals and outcomes, and working process" (p. 5). In this study I have reported self-reflexively, and have stated my own assumptions, shortcomings, and intentions in the research. In this way, I believe feminist research has informed my work, and that it can be considered in the realm of feminist research. Including specific reflections and personal experiences with the process of analysis in the thesis itself may help to break down some of the "traditional", or androcentric aspects of hierarchical academic research.

Continuing from the feminist vein into postmodern theory is appropriate for the purposes of this study, and has been a major focus of some feminist researchers including Bloom (1998) who is concerned with the concept of human subjectivity and emphasizes:

Claiming the existence of an individual essence in Western humanist ideology denies the possibilities of changes in subjectivity over time; masks the critical roles that language, social interactions, and pivotal experiences play in the production of subjectivity....Because of these limits in humanist concepts of subjectivity, postmodern feminists embrace the idea that an understanding of nonunitary subjectivity in women's lives is critical to feminist research and epistemology. (p. 3)

Extending this notion to the cross-cultural context, espousing a postmodern framework within the feminist method is instructive as, “postmodernism offers feminism some useful ideas about method, particularly a wariness toward generalizations which transcend the boundaries of culture and region” (Nicholson, 1990, p. 5). Examining important issues related to the product of research, including the inability of the researcher to speak for the participants have allowed me to map out a clearer picture of my role in the research process. Embracing the postmodern notion of multiple or fragmented subjectivities has enabled me to appreciate the individual, case by case narratives provided in the interview context, and has discouraged me from attempting to generalize between participants, and the experiences shared in the interviews. Learning from Munro’s (1998) research, it is in keeping with postmodern theory to “resist constructing a unitary tale” (p. 87). As Munro cautions, “The inclination of both the narrator, as well as the researcher, to construct a coherent self is a strong one...” (p. 87). Such considerations are valuable for the analysis of the narratives of SEOLs.

Postmodernism is also integral to my work in its contributions to research of culture. The issue of Standard English, the native speaker/nonnative speaker dichotomy, and the issue of Othering are all raised within this study as central foci for understanding the nature of the experiences of SEOLs studying in a cross-cultural environment. Postmodernism informs this work, and Lather’s (1991) explanation of the essence of postmodernism supports this assertion:

The essence of the postmodern argument is that the dualisms which continue to dominate Western thought are inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities. (p. 21)

In this study, postmodernism provides a basis for critique and dialogue, both of which are desirable goals for the university as a whole. As McLaren (1995) believes, “A critical understanding of the relationship between the self and other is one of the crucial challenges of current pedagogical practices in the age of postmodernism” (p. 17). He asserts that:

The implication here for educators is to construct a pedagogy of ‘difference’ which neither exoticizes nor demonizes the ‘Other’ but rather seeks to locate difference in both its specificity and ability to provide positions for critically engaging social relations and cultural practices. (p. 18)

In an attempt to provide an in-depth, personal view of SEOLs experiences from the perspectives of six participants, connections between language and culture were sought, and are explained in the next section. A critical approach to the learning experiences of SEOLs in a context of language learning represents just one element of this study. Locating such experiences in a context of social and cultural factors allows for a more holistic picture of the interactions taking place when a SEOL attends an English-speaking university in an English-speaking community.

## 2.6 Language and culture

Intercultural communication is a developing area in both professional training and educational contexts (Guilherme, 2002). For the purposes of outlining existing models and theoretical work in this area, this section describes some models from work in the areas of communicative competence, intercultural communication, cross-cultural awareness, and intercultural sensitivity, and draws on critical literature to provide a critique of the basic tenets of existing literature providing these types of models. Approaching the notion of language through a postmodern lens, it is possible to challenge

the conception of language as simply a medium of translation of one's thoughts (as asserted in Pinker, 1994). More critical explanations of language are provided by authors such as Weedon (1987), who acknowledges language from a poststructuralist perspective, arguing, "Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed*" (p. 21, emphasis in original). It is this position that guides the study, arguing that language is more than a simplistic mode of communication.

The intersection of language and culture is of particular interest to me, as understandings forged between myself and the participants during the interviews are necessarily filtered through these two constructs. Habermas' (1984) Theory of Communicative Action emphasizes the interaction of communication and action, and theorizes that formal rationality poses a threat to free and open communication. Habermas' notion of *communicative rationality* is explained in Guilherme (2002) as a concept that, "involves acting according to the expectations raised by existing norms and being aware of them so that one is ready to justify the resultant situation and, when necessary, to make the corrections required through discursive argumentation" (p. 75). He asserts that underlying assumptions and shared understandings are required for communicative action to take place. Habermas locates language in a socio-cultural context, and argues, "learning to master a language or learning how expressions in a language should be understood requires socialization into a form of life" (p. 63).

Intercultural communication through dialogue is central to Kramsch's (1993) four-step model. Kramsch's model informs research in language learning as it challenges



the native/nonnative dichotomy, and proposes that the supposition holding the native speaker as a model speaker is a fallacy, and should be problematized. In a subsequent publication, Kramsch (1998) highlights, “Both *native speakers* and *non-native speakers* can belong to various language groupings, of which there are more or less recognized members” (p. 30, emphasis in original). This informs the reading and analysis of interviews in my study, as it considers the notion of world Englishes (see Jenkins, 2003; Singh, 1996; Kachru, 1994), and rejects the native speaker dominance, or the perception of a “standard” English (see Haugen, 2003; Thomas, 1999; Lippi-Green, 1997).

Hanvey (1975) also presents a four-step model of cross-cultural awareness. Level one is a superficial stage whereby stereotyping and Othering are commonplace. Othering refers to the essentialization of the “other” individual, culture, language etc. in opposition to oneself, one’s culture, or language. Kubota (2001) warns, “The Othering of ESL/EFL students by essentializing their culture and language presupposes the existence of the unproblematic Self as a monolithic, normative category” (p. 10). Continuing with the next level of Hanvey’s model, step two involves building upon prior knowledge of the second culture (C2), with particular emphasis on differences, and subsequent problematization of the culture. The third step reaches an intellectual acceptance as a basis for understanding the C2, and the final step represents empathy for the C2, as a process of lived experience.

Following Hanvey (1975), Bennett (1986, 1993) presents a six stage Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) based on elements of cognitive psychology and constructivism. Bennett’s (1993) model is premised on the goal of intercultural sensitivity, a term he defines as, “the construction of reality as increasingly

capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes development” (p. 24). The levels increase in sensitivity to cultural difference as they progress, with the first three levels representing an ethnocentric view of the world. That is, the C1 is the core or reference culture. The remaining three levels represent an ethnorelative positioning, whereby negotiation between the C1 and C2 occurs. Specifically, stage one begins with denial of, or isolation from difference. Stage two, defense, correlates to the view that the C1 is superior, and people at this stage perceive cultural difference as a threat. Minimization of cultural difference is the third stage of Bennett’s model, and indicates the projection of universalities onto the C2 in order to minimize differences. The fourth stage, acceptance indicates respect for cultural differences, and an awareness of the complexity of both the C1 and C2. Adaptation, the fifth stage, may involve cognitive or behavioral adjustment in order to communicate in an appropriate manner in the C2. Finally, the broadening of one’s self-concept to facilitate a higher-level cultural understanding indicates the sixth stage, integration of cultural difference. According to Bennett and Hammer (1998), “The underlying assumption of the model is that as one’s experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one’s competence in intercultural relations increases” (p. 1).

The models described above provide a view of some of the literature available in the area of intercultural communication and communicative competence. The essentialization of a fixed number of steps in an intercultural experience is apparent in much of the earlier work in this field, and can provide a basis for critique and growth. Kramsch’s (1993) model is designed to initiate change, and encourages students and educators to challenge such traditional notions as using “authentic” teaching materials in

the language classroom. While this model demonstrates progress towards a more critical frame for educators of language learners, Guilherme (2002) observes that through its focus on individual growth, “it leaves out other implications of a critical pedagogy of foreign language/culture education namely an explicit social and political commitment” (p. 141). From a postmodern view, Bennett’s (1986, 1993) model appears to oversimplify otherwise complex processes of intercultural development, and lack reference to social interactions and individual experiences. As Guilherme (2002) critiques, “Bennett’s model does not problematize the formation of (inter)cultural identities sufficiently” (p. 136). Similarly, Hanvey’s (1975) model creates a superficial image of the progression from level one, where the

A substantial area of research in the field of SLA has been developed in relation to motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) and, more recently, investment (Norton Peirce, 1995) of language learners. Based on her research with immigrant language learners in Canada, Norton Peirce (1995) argues that motivation is too simplistic a way of explaining why some students may advance much more rapidly than others with similar ability. She suggests that learner performance in the language is contextualized and that learners will perform differently at different times and places depending on how much they have invested in a given situation. Willingness to study and use a second language is not simply a function of personality, but of ever changing circumstances and contexts. For example, a learner might generally have a “high affective filter”, yet might find the courage to speak English if her family’s future depended on her finding a job that required her to speak English. This exemplifies an instrumental motivation, but a very vital one likely to lead to intake and comprehensible output. Because of the complexities

of learners' relationships to each other, to society, and to the target language, Norton (2000) suggests that "investment" is a better term to use in discussing this aspect of second language acquisition. Norton's perspective illustrates that theories of SLA have generally ignored power structures and delimiting practices for language learners, and she argues that some theorists:

...have assumed that learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual. (p. 5)

Assuming a critical approach to this study necessitates that these models of language learning not be discarded, but rather challenged, questioned, and utilized as sites of dialogue and learning. In critiquing these models, I do not suggest that they are irrelevant, or that I have generated a more appropriate model, rather, I hope to demonstrate a view that considers, like Norton (2000), that language "is understood with reference to its social meaning" (p. 5). The next section focuses on the contributions of this study in relation to previous work conducted at Memorial University.

## 2.7 Contributions of this study

Literature on SEOLs studying at Memorial University (e.g., Burnaby, 2002; Koenderman, 2000; Parsons, 2000; Carley, 1998<sup>1</sup>) focus primarily on the international student community, including both native speakers of English and those who speak English as an other language. This leaves issues surrounding First Nations and Canadian Francophone students relatively wanting, and illuminates questions as to the population,

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<sup>1</sup> The reports cited here from Koenderman (2000) and Carley (1998) were unavailable at the time of this study. All references to these works are based on secondary sources Burnaby (2002) and Parsons (2000).

needs, and support services available for these students. Approaching the study with an emphasis on the personal narratives of the needs, expectations, and daily educational and social experiences of the participants is intended to expand upon findings from existing literature in this area, and is expected to contribute to a growing need for information for those in the business of recruiting and providing services for SEOLs, including professors and administrative staff at Memorial University. While no Aboriginal participants were available for this study, further research at this university should attempt to recruit Aboriginal participants whose first language is not English in order to address issues of particular relevance to those students.

The study is intended to offer a new perspective on Memorial University's capabilities for addressing the needs of SEOLs, how the university's strategies and plans are perceived and/or experienced by SEOLs in a context of language learning, and a specific emphasis on issues that emerge from the participants' narratives. Gee (1985) proposes, "One of the primary ways- probably *the* primary way- human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form..." (p. 11). Researchers of second language education utilize narrative methods for a variety of reasons. Allowing students at Memorial University a voice through my research is one way to encourage the challenging of existing dominant narratives on this campus.

As indicated previously, limitations of other studies are addressed through the emphasis on the personal experiences of SEOLs attending Memorial University. Burnaby's (2002) report concedes, "The greatest limitation, because of time constraints, is the small number of students who were consulted directly in the research" (p. 3). In answer to such limitations, my research aimed to build a structure of collaboration with

the participants as active members in the design of the interviews and the structure of their journals. The study also builds on prior research through the interview approach, designed to obtain detailed accounts from a small number of participants. Interviews were used to provide the detail and reciprocity lacking in the questionnaire method, and employ a small sample as a *tool* for rigorous inquiry as opposed to a shortcoming. It also builds on Carley's (1998) focus group study with international students at MUN, and attempts to provide information over a period of five months to observe any changes in the participants' attitudes or experiences spanning two semesters.

## 2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter key themes from the literature on international, foreign, and SEOL students were examined. Key literatures on the experiences of language learners in educational contexts, research on cross cultural adjustment, and studies focusing on the needs of SEOL students from an administrative or support services standpoint were described. Based on their purpose, methodology, and findings, related studies were presented and subsequently compared with this study. A theoretical critique is provided citing key models of intercultural communication (Bennett, 1986, 1993; Kramsch, 1993; Hanvey, 1975), and SLA theories of acculturation (Brown, 1980; Schumann, 1978). Finally, the contribution of this study was highlighted in relation to the literature cited and the context of the university at which the research was conducted. The next chapter focuses on the design of this study, and discusses in further detail the methodology and epistemological underpinnings for my research.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the epistemological underpinnings that drive the study. Qualitative methods of collection and analysis were employed in the research, and participants were requested to engage in three interviews, as well as keep a written journal of their experiences as SEOLs. Focusing on the participants primarily as language learners assumes a particular educational perspective, which is facilitated by my experiences as a teacher of EFL (English as a Foreign Language). A discussion of the rationale and the methods of data collection, participant selection, and data analysis follow.

### 3.2 Epistemological underpinnings

Creswell and Miller (2000) identify two perspectives for guiding validity in qualitative research. They discuss both the lens (or perspective) of the researcher, and paradigm assumptions as influential in laying the foundation for valid research. The lens of the researcher reflects the decisions made in regard to the variables used for the study, for example, the duration of study, and how much data to collect. Another aspect of the researcher lens has to do with the participants, and how their contributions are reflected in the presentation of the research findings. One way to ensure validity of the participants' perspectives is through the involvement of participants in checking material to ensure it is an accurate representation of their stories, a process known as member checking.

Statement of one's paradigm assumptions can also assist in shaping the research, and lend credibility or validity to the study. Assuming a constructivist, or interpretive perspective for this study, the process was aimed towards an emergent, open-ended design, and a similarly interpretive analysis of the data. Emergent design is addressed in Patton (2002), who maintains:

Design flexibility stems from the open-ended nature of naturalistic inquiry as well as pragmatic considerations. Being open and pragmatic requires a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty as well as trust in the ultimate value of what inductive analysis will yield. (p. 44)

For insight into the constructivist epistemology, Patton (2002) offers:

Because human beings have evolved the capacity to interpret and *construct* reality- indeed, they cannot do otherwise- the world of human perception is not real in an absolute sense, as the sun is real, but is “made up” and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs. (p. 96)

In constructivist research, perceptions and subjective explanations are emphasized in favour of “truths” and “objectivity”. In addition, as indicated in chapter two, I have drawn on theories of postmodernism for critical perspectives on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature. “Postmodernism asserts that no language, not even that of science, can provide a direct window through which one can view reality” (Patton, 2002, p. 100).

Bearing temporal constraints often associated with this level and type of research i.e. the Master's thesis, as much time as possible was allowed for interaction with the participants for the interview method. Extended periods in the field is a feature of constructivist research, and it was my intention to follow this model within the limits of my research situation. Interviews took place over the course of six months, and are described further in section 3.4.



While generalizability is not a goal of this research, transferability is an important consideration in my aim to diversify the discourse surrounding a particular group of SEOLs. Transferability, according to Trochim (2002) “refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing” (§ 4). For the purpose of this study, exploration of SEOLs’ experiences seeks to locate in-depth narratives as a means of providing insight and information into the ways these students experience their cross-cultural higher education. For future initiatives seeking to generalize findings, I have provided contextualized excerpts of the participants’ own words in the presentation and analysis of the findings in chapters four and five. It is possible, then for future research to transfer the results of this study to like university campuses, however generalizations are not recommended because of the small sample size.

### 3.3 Participant Selection

After receiving approval from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (see Appendix A), it was deemed appropriate to contact potential participants from a distance as personal contact might imply coercion. To maintain this ethical consideration, a flyer of the study was sent via email to the International Student listserv, the Graduate Student Union listserv, and was posted in a number of different buildings at the university (see Appendix B). Approximately 25 students responded, with only four studying at the undergraduate level. Respondents were self-identified SEOLs. Five graduate students and one doctoral student were chosen to participate based on their

country of origin, gender, and the mother tongue they identified in their response. The reason for not choosing undergraduate students was not intentional; rather the lack of responses from undergraduate students influenced my choice of participants. For this reason, the six participants are all above the undergraduate level; however the countries of origin and first languages of the participants are diverse. I have chosen to present the participants' regions of origin in "crude categories" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 63) naming the country, as opposed to the specific province, state, territory, etc., in an attempt to provide as much anonymity as possible to participants. In addition, one participant requested that their home country not be named, as there are very few students from that country attending Memorial University.

### 3.4 Data Collection

#### *3.4.1 Guided interviews*

As an extension of the constructivist theoretical perspective as declared above, the interview method was chosen as a representation of research "as a social production symbolically negotiated between researcher and participant" (Goetze & LeCompte, 1984, p. 57). I decided early on in the research process that I would like to directly involve participants in the structuring of the interview process, imagining, based on other instances of this type of interviewing (e.g., Bloom, 1998; Munro, 1998), that participants would feel more comfortable with a conversational style interview, founded on participant-researcher reciprocity. However, in an attempt to adequately prepare for the interviews, and in anticipation of potential difficulties with such an unstructured process, I planned semi-structured, or guided format, designing questions within a specific outline

of specific topics and issues based on my reading of the literature as a ‘plan B’ in the event an interview did not proceed as I expected (see Appendix E). According to Patton (1980), this interview guide approach draws strength from the relatively conversational, situational tone of the interview, and “the outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent” (p. 206).

### *3.4.2 Multiple interviews in research*

Drawing on the literature, three interview sessions were planned as a means to collect enough information from the participants, as well as to give me, as a first time researcher, an opportunity to learn from and improve upon each session. From a feminist perspective, Reinharz (1992) offers, “Feminist researchers who do multiple interviews of each individual may engage their interviewees in designing the interview format as they proceed” (p. 36). In addition, the three-interview structure as outlined by Seidman (1991) offers a model of three interviews with varying foci allowing the researcher to glean a rounded, fleshed-out account of the participants’ experiences through their own words. Utilizing interview models like that of Leki and Carson (1997) who specifically look at the writing experiences of ESL students, the multiple interview process is reinforced. Leki and Carson prefer two interviews, rationalizing that students experience various situations at different times during a semester, and spacing two interviews apart provided students an opportunity to share a greater range of possible writing experiences.

Some researchers in the area of EFL have employed more than three interviews in an attempt to cover a wide range of issues related to the research initiative. For example, Casanave (2002) constructs a process encompassing seven interviews, each addressing a

different aspect of second/ foreign language learning pertaining to specific educational experiences of EFL students. Another of Casanave's research projects with bilingual academic scholars involves a four-interview structure, including a list of guiding questions for semi-structured interviews.

The semi-structured interview was utilized in my study in an attempt to offer participants a relaxed atmosphere conducive to sharing, participation, and dialogue, while maintaining a general format, and ensuring similar topics were covered with each participant. In preparation for a semistructured interview format, I composed a list of questions intended to guide the anticipated three interviews adapted from the studies included in the literature review, the specific interview samples from related studies (see Norton Pierce, 1993; Casanave, 2002; Sanner, Wilson, & Samson, 2002), and from questions generated during my own research and investigation (see Appendix E).

The basic outline of these three interviews established an introductory session designed to glean background information that allowed access to some critical information about the participants' linguistic history, their relationship with the English language, and some educational experiences. Guiding questions, as utilized in a similar study exploring the experiences of international nursing students (Sanner, Wilson, & Samson, 2002) supported my intention to have the participants discuss their perceptions of Memorial University since their arrival, especially in regard to academic experiences, and specific details about experiences as learners in various fields of study at this university. The second interview session aimed to locate more specific experiences academically as well as socially, and the interviewees' feelings and perceptions concerning these experiences. The third interview, conducted by email, provided the

participants with an opportunity to clarify earlier responses, to follow up with more recent accounts of specific experiences, to add any other stories they felt were pertinent to the study, and to answer additional questions that arose during the transcribing, reading, and analyzing of the interviews. Two of the participants, Sylvie, and Khaled were unavailable for the final interview, and in these cases analysis was based solely on the first two interviews conducted face to face, as well as any journal material submitted by the participants.

Interviews for this study began in November, with the second interview in early December around final examinations, and the third interview in late February or early March, which, in Newfoundland corresponds with the middle to end of the winter season, cold temperatures, and challenging conditions, especially for students living off-campus. The spacing of the interviews was intended to provide a view of any changes in the participants' perspectives, course loads, living situations, or other factors that may have influenced their narratives during the course of the study.

### *3.4.3 Journals and inclusion of textual data*

As an extension of the interview process, I invited interview participants to keep a journal as a means of articulating experiences and thoughts outside of the interview sessions. A limitation of my study is the fact that I conducted the interviews in English, which is not the first language of the participants. Following a study by Krishnan and Lee (2002), diaries or journals are a means of “listening to ‘voices’” of language learners and can serve as a powerful tool to develop and improve courses for these students (p. 227). Writing their experiences was intended to give participants an opportunity to supplement

narratives shared in the interviews, and for some students, may have been easier, or more comfortable than expressing themselves in face-to-face conversation. Johnson (1994) also employs the collection of data through the journals of participants, complementing observations and interviews in her qualitative study. In both Johnson (1994) and Krishnan and Lee (2002), journals are guided by a series of very general questions or general information on the purpose of keeping a journal. The journal-keeping exercise was different from the interview method, and was utilized to supplement our sessions with reflective, diary-like commentaries of daily experiences. I initially asked students to keep a very informal daily account of their experiences as language learners, and as SEOLs. However, because many of the participants appeared hesitant to begin their journals with this general information, I found it necessary to provide further clarification for the task. Throughout the study, the journal-keeping activity proved challenging for the participants, as their busy schedules prevented them from regularly submitting the journals. Two of the participants- Inder and Sylvie- provided no journal entries for the study, and the analysis of their contributions are based only on the interviews. The questions provided to each participant as a journal guide are derived from the interviews and are shown in Appendix F.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

#### *3.5.1 Free and Informed Consent*

In addition to the signed consent form required of participants (see Appendices C and D), each participant was informed of the nature of my study during our first meeting, and in compliance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for*

*Research Involving Human Subjects (TCPS)* Article 2.1, “their free and informed consent [was] maintained throughout their participation in the research”. Participants were informed of their right to cease participation at any time during the research, and were invited to direct questions or concerns to me, my supervisor, or a third party from the Faculty of Education not directly involved in the research.

### *3.5.2 Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality*

Article 3.2 in the *TCPS* indicates that participants must be informed as to the extent of their privacy and confidentiality. Interview participants were ensured that my supervisor and I were the only people with access to the interview transcripts (I transcribed all interviews personally), and journals, and that specific identifying information was not to be included in the thesis itself. Anonymity is somewhat more difficult to achieve in such a study that attempts to highlight cultural issues specific to students from a particular geographical and cultural background. In fact, Cohen et al. (2000) claim, “A subject agreeing to a face-to-face interview...can in no way expect anonymity. At most, the interviewer can promise confidentiality” (p. 61).

In addition to the above measures to ensure confidentiality, I have considered the necessity for “crude report categories” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 63). The use of general categories to describe a participant’s background will help reduce the possibility of identification through the data presented in the thesis. Of course, names and specific dates are not included, and all measures have been taken to ensure the confidentiality of all participants. A final means to ensure confidentiality was attempted in the process of member checking, when participants were asked to view a near-final draft of the data

analysis. All participants were satisfied with the accuracy of the information, and expressed their confidence that the presentation did not pose a threat to their anonymity.

### *3.5.3 Cross-cultural issues*

While the study was conducted in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it may be classified as a type of cross-cultural research because the participants are from a range of cultures, and the participant/researcher relationship was negotiated through cultural assumptions and understandings. Awareness of diversity, individuality, and social and cultural background assisted me in creating a relationship of shared learning as opposed to one based upon cultural bias, stereotyping, and hierarchy from the researcher to the participant. My experiences as an EFL teacher in Southeast Asia have helped me to generate this awareness, and, as illustrated in chapter one, my experiences have contributed to a re-evaluation of my own position as a White, English-speaking woman in an increasingly diverse world. These issues are discussed throughout the study.

Stone (2002), in acknowledging her position as a White woman conducting interviews with women of various backgrounds unlike her own considers:

I was still a white researcher asking women of color to talk about their lives. As such I found it essential to acknowledge the contradiction between my own feelings of solidarity and the imbalance of power between black women and white in a racist society. While seeking commonality and connection, it was equally critical to acknowledge the racial gulf across which I was speaking, and to learn from the differences in experience that such a gulf entails (p. 9).

The issue of Western, White women conducting research cross-culturally is complex and feminists are divided on approaches. Researchers Archibald and Crnkovich (1995) posit, “While we are usually at a disadvantage in working with women whose first and sometimes only language is Inuktitut, we do have one clear advantage: at no time can we



presume to speak on behalf of Inuit women” (p. 113). This demonstrates a positive side to being an “outsider”, and in my case indicates the benefit of highlighting such a position in my work by stating my position in relation to the participants, and explicitly revealing my inability to assume the same access to the information gleaned from my research as those giving the information. Also, because of the very nature of the emphasis of “giving voice” inherent in feminist and narrative-based methods, the inability to speak for participants reinforces their own access to the research, and reduces the possibility of any inadvertent attempts on my part to do so. As Reinharz (1992) argues, “Hearing other people’s stories also provides the researcher with an alternative case that prevents her from generalizing exclusively from her own experience” (p. 34).

To understand the words of my participants would mean to share their experiences and cultural background, which I do not. To listen to their words, and offer interpretations of their stories has to do with collaboration and reciprocity in a format that includes the participants, and values their own words, values, and opinions, and the means used to express them. The next section addresses the approaches to analysis taken in this study.

### 3.6 Analysis of the findings

#### *3.6.1 Approaches to analysis*

Approaching data analysis of this magnitude for the first time was a daunting task and required constant refinement and adjustment to negotiate the analysis techniques from the literature, and advice from more experienced researchers with my personal research goals and epistemology. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) illustrate, “Rather than

relegating analysis to a period following data collection, ethnographers [and other qualitative researchers] analyze data throughout the study” (p. 165). For this reason, I began preliminary analyses of everything from participants’ narratives to my personal reactions to their comments almost immediately. After the first interviews, I transcribed each verbatim, including my own questions and some basic non-verbal vocalizations such as laughter or pauses in speech. I maintained brief field notes as reminders of my initial thoughts and perceptions of the process, and filed them separately for future reference. The next phase was less straightforward. As Strauss (1987) cautions, “Coding is the most difficult operation for inexperienced researchers to understand and to master” (p. 442). Coding began with the completion of the first phase of interviews. Examining the transcripts at this phase, I began looking for patterns in the data. As a novice researcher, I drew upon Neuman (2003) for guidance: “Seeing themes rests on four abilities: (1) recognizing patterns in the data, (2) thinking in terms of systems and concepts, (3) having tacit knowledge or in-depth background knowledge, and (4) possessing relevant information” (p. 442). My first time perusing the data, I noted themes and key words based on repetition both within and across transcripts, as well as in the journals. The next analysis was more systematic, and was drawn more deliberately from the literature. Analysis of the interviews is outlined below.

### *3.6.2 Analysis of Interview Data*

Analyzing the interview transcripts was an iterative, open-ended, trial-and-error process whereby each attempt to locate patterns and themes in the data led to the emergence of new questions to be asked in subsequent interviews and the refinement of

initial questions. Neuman's (2003) detailed explanation of techniques for qualitative analysis in social research also contributed significantly to my understanding of open coding, a method I employed after the initial reading of the interview transcripts. Neuman offers, "The themes are at a low level of abstraction and come from the researcher's initial research question, concepts in the literature, terms used by members in the social setting, or new thoughts stimulated by immersion in the data" (p. 443). The author specifies that codes are comprised of five parts: label, definition, flag, qualifications, and an example, with each part becoming more specific and detailed. Preliminary analysis revealed themes consistent with some of the literature, such as issues of language needs (see Leki & Carson, 1997), or lack of language needs, student services (see Sanner, Wilson, & Samson, 2002), as well as issues appearing frequently within and between participants' stories. Each subsequent analysis resulted in further clarification, detail, and regrouping of thematic units. The findings and subsequent analysis is presented in detail in chapter four and five.

### *3.6.3 Analysis of Journals*

As in the interview process, the generation of themes from participants' journals followed a similar procedure. Johnson's (1994) analysis of qualitative data in her study of preservice ESL teachers offers a similar scheme of identifying, comparing and coding of themes from all methods of data collection. Using such models as a guide, processes of theme-emergent design were followed, and used to support, corroborate, elaborate on, or clarify issues and points raised in the interviews. The journals themselves did not represent a large volume of data (i.e. they were not daily accounts of experiences, but

rather infrequent commentaries on living and learning in a new place), and became complementary to the interview process, as opposed to an equal body of material to be interpreted and analyzed independently. The themes arising from the interviews and journals supported each other, and strengthened the study in the sense that participants were afforded an opportunity to reflect on the interviews and their experiences, and to write freely without constraints imposed by a meeting with the researcher.

### 3.7 Limitations

Conducting a study about the experiences of any group of people poses questions related to generalizability. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, generalizability was not an aim of this study, and researchers or other interested parties are cautioned against making broad generalizations based on these findings. The interviews and journals focused on the personal experiences of participants as a means of better representing the views of SEOLs at Memorial University in particular, and encouraging dialogue surrounding this group. Understanding the experiences of individuals cannot be extrapolated for entire populations (e.g. all SEOLs attending Memorial, or SEOLs attending similar universities), however the findings may allow for supplemental information from a level yet under-represented at this particular institution- that is, the individual level.

Another possible limitation of the study raised in this chapter is the language of communication used in the interviews and journals. While all of the participants in this study are assumed to have a certain proficiency in English in order to study at this level, and have passed proficiency exams to prove their competency, it can be hypothesized that

SEOLs may be better able to express themselves in their first, or primary language of use, for a variety of reasons. Alternatively, the participants' level of English, and my ability to understand them clearly may provide a deeper view of how they are received by other "native" speakers of English, and add to their accounts of daily experiences. In other words, what may be viewed as a limitation may have been a strength, in that I was able to, in some ways, imagine myself in some of the situations where the participants' stories involved a "native" English speaker.

According to Leki and Carson (1997), no research method is perfect, and with interview data, problems may arise with participants "remembering incorrectly, attempting to show oneself in the best possible light, adapting answers to what one assumes the investigator wants to hear" in addition to interpersonal factors of the interview, for example, "the researcher's inadvertently indicating preferred responses" (p. 44). In response to these problematic features of the interview, the authors propose that in their study these factors "were minimized at least partly by the fact that we had no preferred responses and were not after facts of a phantom, objective truth but our informants' reactions, perceptions, and experiences as they themselves understood them" (p. 44). I also tried to keep this in mind as I conducted the study, and followed the tenet that participants' stories, as well as my interpretation and presentation of those narratives, are filtered through experiences, cultural assumptions, and educational experiences. For future research endeavors, it would be beneficial to triangulate methods of data collection, as indicated above with focus groups, a more longitudinal study, or supplemented with quantitative methods.

### 3.8 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the epistemological and methodological paradigms from which my research emerged. Statement of one's paradigmatic assumptions can assist in shaping the research, and lend credibility or validity to the study. As Creswell and Miller (2000) assert, "Constructivists believe in pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g.; sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality" (p. 12-13). Identifying with this paradigm, along with feminist and postmodernist theories, and their epistemological foundations helped evolve the research design and methodology for my study, and are referred to throughout. In chapters four and five, which follow, findings and analyses are presented. Chapter four explores those themes from the participants that focus primarily on issues related to language learning. Themes include standard and world Englishes; self-efficacy in English; language socialization; narratives of strategies and challenges; inevitability of learning English; status and access for English speakers; and communication through English.

## CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE LEARNING

*Language, then, is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril.*

Susan Bassnett-McGuire: *Translation studies* (1980).

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines themes related to language learning generated through the participants' interviews and journals. As the opening epigraph suggests, language is situated within a deeper context of culture, and while the next chapter focuses specifically on themes related to culture, it is misleading to discuss the two issues as distinct entities and aspects of culture are necessarily included in this chapter on language learning. As the researcher, I ultimately decided which quotes to include and which to omit from this discussion. However quotes from the participants are presented verbatim to provide a sample of the experiences and views they shared with me, and in an attempt to offer them an opportunity to speak for themselves. In some cases, I have included my questions to contextualize the response. The six language-related themes covered in this chapter include: standard and world Englishes; self-efficacy in English; language socialization: narratives of strategies and challenges; inevitability of learning English; status and access for English speakers; and communication through English. The chapter begins with a discussion of perspectives on conditions for language learning, not as a theme from the data, but rather to provide an introduction to the issues raised by participants, and to offer perspectives from the literature on language learning.

## 4.2 Language learning and the conditions for communication

Globalization- a term with no one all-encompassing definition- as observed by Block and Cameron (2002) “changes the conditions under which language learning takes place” (p. 5). They contend, “The commodification of language affects both people’s motivations for learning languages and their choices about which languages to learn” (p. 5). Language learning is addressed in this chapter through themes arising from the participants in the study, all of whom have, in some way, been personally motivated to learn English. The issues they have raised are located in the literature in the field of language education, and are addressed at the micro- (personal experiences) and macro- (social and global contexts) levels. Personal experiences are important to this study as they provide key information about daily events and perspectives from the lives of SEOLs in a cross-cultural setting. These micro-level themes emerged through the interviews and journals of participants, and were later linked to formal theory or related literature to provide supporting or alternative perspectives. Macro-level themes contextualize these experiences within related categories of power, domination, and globalization. Bourdieu (1977a) links the individual and group levels in terms of language ownership:

Just as, at the level of relations between groups, a language is worth what those who speak it are worth, so too, at the level of interactions between individuals, speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it. (p. 652)

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Norton (2000) questions the circumstances surrounding language learning, suggesting that conditions for communication should not be taken for granted. Norton (1997) also asserts these conditions include, “that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen and that those who listen regard those



who speak as worthy to speak” (p. 411). This view is based on Bourdieu’s (1977a) notion of *legitimate discourse*. In addition, this study considers Bourdieu’s (1991a) assertion that “All linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices,” and “legitimate practices” are “the practices of those who are dominant” (p. 53). These notions are addressed indirectly through the participants’ contributions in this study.

Some participants expressed noticeable improvement in spoken English as a result of increased opportunities to speak or work with native speakers of English. For example, Jo, who at the beginning of the study expressed a decline in her English skills because her peer group consisted solely of Thai students, later noted:

During the last two weeks, I had to work on my term-project [with 1-3 other English speakers]. All of them are Canadian so I find myself speak more fluently than ever. I think it is because I have to spend the whole day speaking only in English with them and by the time I’ve got back home, my roommate, who is Thai, had already been in bed. So I’ve almost never spoken in Thai during that time!

Hunter also expressed satisfaction in immersing himself in English and surrounding himself with English speakers. When I asked if he socialized with any of the other German students on campus, he was emphatic that he didn’t. He felt it would interfere with his learning experience, and that he should take advantage of the English-speaking environment, as that was his purpose for coming to Memorial in the first place. I asked if he was ever tempted to hang out with the German students because he missed speaking German. He responded:

No. I mean I have conversations by email. It doesn’t matter to me if I write German or speak German, it’s like, once in awhile you wanna feel that you can exactly say what you think, but I mean the longer I’m here, the closer I get to the point where I can express my voice in English, you know.

Reflecting on her early language learning experiences in the context of EFL in China, Liz commented that while her teachers' methods may not be considered relevant today in terms of current language pedagogy, they were effective for her as a young English language learner:

Liz: I had two good teachers, but they are totally different. In ah middle school, I have a female teacher and [s]he was very strict with students and [s]he had us to recite all the whole text you know, and one by one. It's just horrible (laughs).

Jenn: Memorizing...?

Liz: Yeah, just, just memorizing. But I think it must sound stupid in nowadays way, stress too much on constructivism or, like that, everything that sounds like too strict is to be criticized, but I think in terms, in terms of language, this kind of practice is very useful, especially when you are in the early age. I don't know, I'm not sure, but it helped me a lot, personally.

Inder also discussed his early language learning experiences, highlighting that his entire family spoke, and continue to speak English, as necessitated by their careers. He discussed his family's influence in one of our interviews:

So when your family has got such a background in which every people do everything in English, you need to have a particular view of what's happening in their lives. We were taught in schools in which everything was in English. But then we used to talk among friends, we used to talk in Hindi, our native language, but then we went to college...then you come across competition exams, you have to go to a Bachelor's stuff right...So to express yourself in completion exams, to write an essay, to write a letter, you have to have a good command over English. So all of these things prompted me...to have a good command of English.

Commenting on the English grammar of one of his Indian friends, Inder attributes his early instruction in English to his current competency in the language:

...[this friend] knows how to speak, he can make other people understand what he wants to say, but grammatically he will be most of the time incorrect. But of course I don't have that problem because I learned in a much more natural way. But most of the people who just try to learn English as part of their curriculum, and don't try to inhale it in themselves, they learn it the wrong way. Not in speaking, grammatically. And you don't have much success if you're not grammatically correct in English.

In this instance, Inder appears to be speaking not only of the immersion in English he received growing up in India, but to a more personal devotion to learning the language, and, he describes it, “inhaling” English. He also links success with the ability to master English grammar. This theme is related to the issue of world Englishes, and is presented in the next section where Inder elaborates on some of the issues surrounding the prevalence of English in his home country, and includes a discussion of Standard English.

This introduction to some of the relevant issues to English language learning introduces the notion that globalization and the popularity of English have a significant influence on the decision to learn English in the first place, and the subsequent success or failure of a learner to master the new language. Particularly relevant to this discussion of English is the issue of language ownership, and questions surrounding the legitimacy- perceived or actual- of those who speak English as an Other language. The participants’ comments on language learning strategies, such as Liz and Inder’s views that English grammar is a fundamental step towards success in the language, and the idea that exposure, i.e. increased interaction with native speakers, is the best way to improve one’s fluency as apparent in Hunter and Jo’s discussions, reveal particular beliefs and standpoints regarding strategies that have influenced these individual language learners. In regard to the notion that language learning requires certain conditions for communication, as raised in these excerpts from the participants and from the literature, the issue of “standard” Englishes and world Englishes comes into play through the ways in which a particular speaker is perceived by native speakers of the target language. The

next section raises questions as to the perceived legitimacy of the English varieties spoken both by SEOLs, as well as native speakers.

#### 4.3 “There’s a difference in my dialect actually”(Inder): Standard and World Englishes

This section looks at the participants’ views on the notion of Standard English, and the ways they perceive the accents or dialects of native English speakers. As many of the participants in this study expressed, the gulf that exists between spoken and written English is large, and despite their obvious competencies in English (i.e. the fact that they’ve all been accepted to study in a language other than their mother tongue), the data reveal a great deal of confusion and frustration amongst SEOLs, particularly in the English-medium academic context. Some of the issues related to speaking English, and the notion of a standard language are interrogated in this section.

Standard English and the native speaker model in language teaching are coming under critique in recognition of the nonnative model as a viable, and perhaps preferable model for language teaching and learning. According to Cook (1999), “language teaching would benefit by paying attention to the L2 user rather than concentrating primarily on the native speaker” (p. 185). While the notion of a “standard” English is controversial, and even elusive, authors have not been deterred from putting forth definitions in attempts to adequately satisfy the hefty requirements for such a complex and political concept. Yule (1985), for example, defines Standard English as:

...the variety which forms the basis of printed English in newspapers and books, which is used in the mass media and which is taught in schools. It is the variety we normally try to teach to those who want to learn English as a second language. (p. 227).

This definition points primarily to textual representations of English, and notably associates the standard language with education and literacy. Standard English is not surprisingly often accompanied by the word *myth* (e.g., Lippi-Green, 1997), indicating the socially constructed nature of such a concept, or *debate* (e.g., Thomas, 1999), suggesting its contested meaning. According to Hudson (1996), “Whereas one thinks of normal language development as taking place in a rather haphazard way, largely below the threshold of consciousness of the speakers, standard languages are the result of a direct and deliberate intervention by society” (p. 32). Lippi-Green (1997) concurs:

The myth of standard language persists because it is carefully tended and propagated. Individuals acting for a larger social group take it upon themselves to control and limit spoken language variation, the most basic and fundamental of human socialization tools. The term standard itself does much to promote this idea: we speak of one standard and in opposition, non-standard, or substandard. This is the core of an ideology of standardization which empowers certain individuals and institutions to make these decisions. (p. 59)

The implications of Standard English for SEOLs are considerable, and the issues of accent and dialect are also important in this discussion. Accent refers to “the description of aspects of pronunciation which identify where an individual speaker is from, regionally or socially” (Yule, 1985, p. 227). Accent, while often falsely associated only with “distinct or easily recognized types of accents” (p. 227), is attributable to all speakers, regardless of linguistic or geographic background (Lippi-Green, 1997; Yule, 1985). Yule (1985) adds that dialect “describes features of grammar and vocabulary, as well as aspects of pronunciation” (p. 227). These definitions of accent and dialect raise questions as to the status of speakers of English, and presents significant implications particularly for those speakers of non-standard, or New Englishes (see Jenkins, 2003).

According to Cook (1999), L2 speakers, or in the case of this study SEOLs, should be viewed as “successful multicompetent speakers, not failed native speakers” (p. 204).

While transcribing the first interview with Inder, I was surprised with my reaction in regard to his pronunciation of a particular word. For reasons of confidentiality, I cannot provide the exact exchange or the word that I could not understand, as it refers to his field of study. However I will try to explain the situation to illustrate my point. Because it was my first time meeting Inder, and I was focused on gaining his trust as an attentive listener, I was reluctant to question every word that I couldn't understand. This is not to say that Inder's English is incomprehensible, or that I had significant problems understanding him, however, as he himself admits, he is a very fast speaker in English as well as his mother tongue, and people often ask him to slow down. I had no difficulty following his story, however I could not understand one particular word, and when it became obvious that it was a key word in the discussion, I asked for clarification. When he explained the context of the word, I asked him to spell it. He said it again, articulating it much slower, and this time I got it. In my embarrassment I responded by exclaiming “Oh!”, and then repeated the word in a way that corrected the syllabic emphasis he had used, as if to say, “Oh! You mean this!” I was horrified when I listened again and again to the recording of this conversation, and took note of it for my analysis. Inder's response when I said the word with my own exaggerated pronunciation was very matter of fact: “Yeah, there's a difference in my dialect actually.” I selected this statement as a heading for this section of the chapter because I felt his comment demonstrated eloquently the point that Standard English is a pervasive means for native speakers of English to engage in legitimizing or delegitimizing, including or excluding, and validating or invalidating

the English of Others. As a critical educator, and a researcher who is highly sensitized to the notion of Othering, I was disappointed and shocked when confronted with my own culturally influenced tendencies, and I wondered how often Inder, or other SEOLs experienced this exact situation while living in an English environment.

World Englishes is a term that engenders the plurality of English, which has developed through its internationalization. Kachru (1992) notes, “Today the trend in referring to different forms and varieties is to accept differentiation within English and even to employ a new plural ‘Englishes’” (p. 28). Mufwene (1997) challenges the notion of *legitimate offspring* of English, a concept referring to varieties of English spoken by European descendents. He takes issue with the naming of New Englishes, arguing the practice “has to do more with who have appropriated and speak them than with how they developed and how different they are structurally from each other, hence with how mutually intelligible they are” (p. 182). This review of just some of the issues embedded in the social and political complexities surrounding SEOLs and language learning demonstrates the potential difficulties of their adjustment to life with a new (and in many cases not so new) language, especially one that threatens to delegitimize those outside of its standardized nucleus. It also illuminates the complexity of language learning as more than simply a process of mastering the rules of grammar, the principles of pronunciation, and the necessary vocabulary.

Wittgenstein (1994) illustrates his view of language as an activity in his introduction of the notion of *language games*; a term intended to “bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of a language is part of an activity, or a form of life” (p. 11). Habermas (1992) draws on this notion of language games to assert, “learning to master a

language or learning how expressions in a language should be understood requires socialization into a form of life" (p. 63). The notion of game is also used by Ortner (1996), and subsequently by Casanave (2002) who asserts that the game metaphor in academic settings, and particularly academic writing, is useful in its references to rules and strategies, choices, and skills made by the players, and distinctions between amateur and expert players. Casanave's notion of games, in her words, is apt as it "is easily conceptualized as a plural phenomenon," an encompassing terms that she uses "to refer...to a multiplicity of games involving a wide range of formal and informal discursual and social conventions" (p. 5). While none of the participants referred explicitly to games in their narratives of experiences with English academic situations, most of the participants implied socialization into English as a reason for attending an English-speaking university. That is, they expressed a desire to experience English in an environment where they could actually use the language on a regular basis. Some participants in the study expressed difficulties in mastering the conventions of spoken English, particularly in the academic context, which is often dissimilar from other social situations, and consists of distinctive rules for communication. Hunter described his frustration:

...if you're sitting in a course, you're in a discussion in class, it's always like all the other people think about what is it I want to say, and how do I say it. I've got another question and this is what can I say and what can I not say. When we're discussing the details of a film in my film studies course, there are many terms I obviously don't know because they are specific terms, you know. And so I always have to say to myself, what do I want to say, and what can I say...to speak English. It's a bit frustrating at times, but I think I'm doing pretty well all in all. There are many people who might have bigger problems than I.

Jo also expressed feelings of confusion when speaking in front of classmates:



Ah, I think maybe because I have to think what I am saying, and at the same time I have to think also grammar, so I'm mixed up.

This challenge also arose in conversations with her professor:

Sometimes, the same sentence in English can mean something different in Thai, especially when I have to add some feeling in it. For example, when I have to discuss with my prof about my thesis, sometime I can only think of some simple word to explain what I have done or what is my idea. This sometimes causes a lot of misunderstanding between him and me. Sometimes, the answer that he gives to my question, instead of clarifying my understanding, it does bring me a lot of confusion. Also I cannot explain something as much as I want to...like while I am answering your interview questions.

In the context of a one-on-one situation, Liz identified this problem of speaking English as it occurred during our interviews, illustrating a difference between spoken and written English for her:

Plural, and tense- past or present or that kind, I have problem with it, because in Chinese we don't have this...like just now I said, "textbooks *is*", and I realized it should be *are* (laughing)...If I write, I won't have problem, I can take time and writing, when you are writing you are more careful, but speak is just too fast.

While English may serve to connect individuals through a common language, culturally related practices and rules present challenges to new participants of the language community. In addition, dialects and new varieties emerging from world Englishes provide sites of tension, and opportunities for discussion. English as a language of domination is considered in Singh (1996), who states:

...the dominance of the international market culture has transformed the conditions under which people communicate with each other in various international situations, such as in education, in business, in tourism, in personal interaction, and in literary creativity. It has done so by forcing the use of English as international custom. (p. 307)

In this study, the "international situation" was represented by cross-cultural interaction between the participants and the researcher. This interaction took place within particular conditions established by the internationalization of English, as we were all forced to

communicate in our “common” language of English. Regarding the notion of a standardized version of English, Thomas (1999) states, “The development of a standard form of a language is tied up with the development of a national and cultural identity, and a national standardised language becomes a symbol of that identity” (p. 155). The implications of this link between culture, identity, and language complicate, and pose challenges to language learning in the everyday lives of SEOLs. Conducting this study in Newfoundland and Labrador, a province with a history of rich linguistic and cultural diversity, provided an opportunity to examine the different ways linguistic expectations of English varieties manifest themselves. While I was interested in the ways the participants use English to communicate, and challenges to their communication in English, two of the participants reminded me of the linguistic plurality that exists within Newfoundland. As a Newfoundlander, I often focus on the perceived cultural and racial homogeneity in which I was raised, and which I continue to see around me. Jo raised the issue of difference in dialects within the province of Newfoundland in a journal entry:

The other language problem that I have faced during spending my life here is when I have to listen to some Newfoundlander, especially one who came from outside St. John’s. I find that they speak with some kind of accent and they all really fast so sometimes I cannot catch even one word from them.

When Inder and I discussed some of the challenges in communicating outside the university community, Inder’s views of Newfoundland English varieties provided one perspective on the issue of Standard English. His comment is similar to Jo’s journal entry; however, Inder goes a little further to say:

Because Newfoundland is a province where the accent is completely different from rest of mainland, where you go to much more...you will find accent different which St. John’s people speak and people in villages speak, right. I was telling you I go to Dominion, all those stores the cashiers there are from small town or village, girls speaking completely differently. It’s really different because

once you go to the mainland people speak much more I would say perceptible way. It's like Newfie English is a little more unpopular because of its...strange way of speaking, you understand what I'm saying, right? People say it's very difficult to understand Newfie English, but when you go to mainland, or mainland US, it's pretty easy to understand them because they speak in a much more plain way and Indians people are pretty compatible with them.

This comment is dense with issues related to language, culture, and economic status. With regard to language, there is the issue of Inder's challenge to understand people whom he says are "speaking completely differently." Culturally, the stigma attached to "Newfie English" and its unpopularity as compared to English spoken in "mainland" Canada or the United States has obviously influenced the beliefs of this student. While previously in this chapter Inder commented that his spoken English was part of a dialect, indicating agreement with the notion of legitimate English varieties or world Englishes, his observations towards "Newfie English" suggest tension and conflict within his own perspective. By his classification of "Newfie English" as "strange" and "difficult to understand", he suggests that there exists a standard by which other varieties are evaluated and judged, and he positions Indian people as "compatible" with mainland, or standard forms of spoken English, thus suggesting that his English is, in fact closer to the standard than some native speakers, i.e. Newfoundlanders. Inder apparently invests in the notion of Standard English, indicating the need to further explore what this means in larger social, political, historical and economic contexts.

These perspectives interested me on a personal level because of the fact that I am a rural Newfoundlander. In fact, I have become relatively conflicted in regard to the matter of my English accent through my own experiences as a rural Newfoundlander travelling abroad, as well as within Canada, and in my home province and community. As I reflected in chapter one, as an English teacher in Japan, I received criticism from

managers, as well as from other teachers at the school, including those from the United States. Even before travelling to Japan, however, I studied at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick where my friends constantly teased me about the way I pronounced certain words, as if they- “they” being from Ontario, and the Maritime provinces- had no accent at all! In my own family, my brother taunts me for my “mainland” i.e. mainland Canada accent, and he insists that I’m constantly putting on airs. The participants in the study apparently believed I was from St. John’s as they had no problem understanding me, and when they spoke about the challenge of deciphering rural Newfoundland accents, I did not feel their comments were directed at me. When I thought about my own conflicted ideas about varieties of English, I realized the importance of further exploration into the notions of Standard English and “native speaker” (see Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998; Lippi-Green, 1997 for critical perspectives on the native speaker myth) in the context of SEOLs in this study. As Thomas (1999) considers:

Standard English is, not coincidentally, the dialect of the middle and upper classes and its forms are prestigious forms. It is the dialect that attracts positive adjectives like ‘good’, ‘correct’, ‘pure’ or ‘proper’ and similarly bestows upon its speakers terms like ‘articulate’, ‘educated’ and ‘intelligent’. Features of other dialects or varieties of English, social, regional, and sometimes national, tend to be judged negatively when compared to it...(p. 155)

On a socio-economic level Inder’s perception of this variety of English is clearly attached to class structures. He states that the cashiers at the grocery store are from “villages” outside of St. John’s, and this is why their English is difficult to understand. In fact, the indication that the cashiers Inder speaks of are from rural areas is misleading, and issues of class and social status must also be considered in such statements as Inder has not confirmed the origin of the women, but rather assumed that they were not from St. John’s because of his evaluation of their accent or dialect. This notion implies that the rural

dialect is somehow wrong, or, perhaps more accurately, that dialect is a strong marker of class. These issues are discussed in Haugen (2003), who states:

‘Dialect’ is...a term that suggests informal or lower-class or rural speech. In general usage it therefore remains quite undefined whether such dialects are part of the ‘language’ or not. In fact, the dialect is often thought of as standing outside the language: ‘That isn’t English.’ This results from the de facto development of a standard language, with all the segregation of an elite and the pyramidal power structure that it has usually implied. (p. 413)

These views provide insight into my tendency to speak English like a “mainlander”. Not only was I ridiculed by those who believe they speak the correct or Standard English, but the view that variations are somehow deviant and even wrong, accompanied by my investment in adapting to the academic world, and not wanting to appear “unintelligent” or “inarticulate” provide insight into my particular shift towards speaking in a more “standardized” manner. In India- Inder’s country of origin- he notes a similar phenomenon with regard to social class and English dialect or competency:

I’m from [region of India], right? I call it the best part of India, of course everything is perfect, like it should be, right in terms of standard of living and many more things. But even when you go to [other parts of] India- [one particular region] ...is a belt of India where people speak the native language in a strange...you know, their accent is completely different, so when those guys speak English, you will find it a bit hard to understand. When you go to [a different region of] India, they will speak English in a very different way. So you’ll find sometimes even them hard to understand.

Inder positions himself as a “legitimate” speaker of English (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 650), or to use Lave and Wenger’s (1991) term, a “legitimate peripheral participant” (p. 35) in relation to both the rural varieties of native speakers of English, and those from lower social classes in Newfoundland, as well as in India. As discussed in chapter two, legitimate peripheral participation refers to “engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent” (p. 35). Inder’s revelation that at this point in his life

English has become his mother tongue can be discussed through Lave and Wenger's determination that legitimate peripheral participation involves power structures, and the authors suggest, "As a place in which one moves toward more-intensive participation, peripherality is an empowering position" (p. 36). Inder is empowered by his participation in the English-speaking community by his contrasting of the quality of his spoken English in relation to the English of others. This raises questions in regard to the legitimacy, or perceived legitimacy of speakers of English. Inder represents the emergence of previously perceived illegitimate speakers of English who are now reaching a comfort level with this Indian variety of English, or "Indian's English", defined by the speaker's "nationality, colour, name and supra-segmental features" (Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998, p. 156). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), "the form that the legitimacy of participation takes is a defining characteristic of ways of belonging, and is therefore not only a crucial condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content" (p. 35).

This section explored the notion of a standard language and the ripple effect such a concept brings to the language and culture into which SEOLs are socialized. Some of the participants pointed specifically to the region of native English speakers from Newfoundland, suggesting that the standard language myth is in fact a common assumption or expectation amongst English language learners. Their comments also revealed the prevalence of class-based assumptions, and, in one case, conflicting views within one of the participant's narratives. Throughout this section it became evident that the issue of world Englishes, and the legitimacy of English spoken both by SEOLs and native speakers is complex and requires further problematization in order to dismantle

misconceptions, and to better understand the myth itself and the ways through which it is promulgated.

These views of language in a context of standardization and education set the stage for the rest of the chapter. In the next section, participants' views of their English language skills are presented. One misconception of SEOLs and of language learners in general is that their self-concept, or self-efficacy is directly correlated to their performance in the target language. This notion is discussed in the following section, raising yet more issues in regard to the complicated web of factors at play in the experiences of SEOLs when participating in native English-speaking communities.

#### 4.4 “I was not confident about my English at all” (Liz): Self-efficacy in English

This section presents participants' views of their own performance in English. Some of the stories are tales of success with, and mastery of English, while others indicate room for improvement, and inadequacy. Primarily, this section focuses on the multiplicity of factors that influence the opportunities a SEOL has to use and to practice their spoken English with native speakers. Stories of exclusivity and unawareness amongst native speakers expose the problematic nature of simplistic connections between confidence and success in language learning found in the literature on SLA.

In language-related literature confidence (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Krashen, 1981), and the notion of self-efficacy (e.g., Bandura, 1997, 1986; Zimmerman, 1995) tend to produce deterministic and problematic discourses of what it means to be successful in language learning, and how one achieves such success. Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1986) as follows:

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's judgements of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with judgements of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses. (p. 931)

I have used the term self-efficacy to encompass the themes of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy as revealed in the participants' stories. Self-efficacy includes judgment of capabilities, multiple dimensions, contexts, mastery-criterion, and pre-task measurements (see Zimmerman, 1995; Templin, Shiroku, & Taira, 1999). While I was reluctant to employ this term because of its simplistic connotation that, "Language learners with high self-efficacy who believe they can learn a language are more likely to learn a language than learners who believe they cannot learn a language" (Templin, Shiroku, & Taira, 1999, n. p.), self-efficacy was deemed an appropriate label for the theme that emerged from the data as it emphasizes the learner's perceptions or judgments of their competencies, as opposed to evaluations strictly based on abilities or skills. In addition, some theories of self-efficacy acknowledge that, "people judge their capabilities differently in different dimensions" (n. p.), thereby inviting discourses of non-unitary subjectivities and contradictory identities (e.g., Norton, 2000; Bloom, 1998; Weedon, 1997), and critiques of related models and theories in the field of language learning. Hoffman (1996) provides such a critique in the context of self-esteem, and examines taken-for-granted assumptions dominating multicultural research and literature in the United States. Her study evidences the misconception in multicultural literature that minority children in particular are lacking self-esteem. She argues:

For one thing, not all minority cultures are as a rule prone to producing individuals with poor self-esteem, and it is certainly dangerous to assume that there is inherently any link between minority cultural status and low self-esteem. This perspective insidiously privileges the majority culture by defining it as the



norm- the standard of high self-esteem toward which the minority should strive.  
(p. 561)

This approach to self-efficacy in language learning challenges the Eurocentric view that cultural values, such as confidence or self-esteem, are necessarily desirable in cross-cultural contexts. Hoffman (1996) elucidates, "In such contexts, the Western ideal of the individuated self that requires standing apart from others to assert its value might be regarded as immature or even pathological in its self-centredness" (p. 560).

In this study, the theme of self-efficacy in English arose from participants' comments ranging from those expressing lack of confidence in one particular area of English, to those feeling extremely confident in a more general sense of having mastered the language. In regard to the relationship between confidence and language learning, Brown (1977) hypothesizes: "Presumably, the person with high self-esteem is able to reach out beyond himself [*sic*] more freely, to be less inhibited, and because of his ego strength, to make the necessary mistakes involved in language learning with less threat to his ego" (p. 352). This is a prevalent view in the literature, and, as noted by Norton (2000) does not account for a multiplicity of different factors, or contradictions within an individual's investment, motivation, confidence, or social response to speaking the language in different contexts.

Norton's (2000) notion of investment is particularly significant in dismantling traditional foci in second language research on motivation. Theories of motivation typically implicate desire or drive as instrumental in language learners' success, Norton's notion of investment, "conceives of the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desires" (p. 10). She explains:

The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. (pp. 10-11)

One of the participants who expressed feelings of inadequacy in speaking English was Jo. When Jo first came to Memorial University from Thailand, she entered the ESL programme on campus because of a misunderstanding in her application process prior to enrolling in the Masters programme (a misunderstanding she said was too long to explain to me). She revealed that the programme did not challenge her, but that it did give her an opportunity to improve her spoken English, which she felt was beneficial:

Jenn: Oh, okay, so you were in the ESL programme for how long?

Jo: For one semester...from September to December.

Jenn: How was that?

Jo: It's okay, it's...more like ah, I think it's more like, it's...ah...it's boring.

Jenn: So, you must've been- you know, you got through it very quickly.

Jo: Yeah.

Jenn: I know some people take a long time...

Jo: Yeah, it's almost the same thing as when I was in university. I have to study the same thing so it's...

Jenn: Review?

Jo: It's kind of review, but I...can practice more...speaking.

Jo noted that her experience of living with a local family upon her arrival in Newfoundland was positive, and that while she emphasizes, "Having a host family did not help me to adjust to life in St. John's," it helped her improve her spoken English, and

to “be a part in some activities, such as Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas dinner, etc., which I have never had experience before.” However, after leaving the family, Jo noticed a decline in her English speaking abilities due to the fact that most of her peers are Thai, and that they communicate in Thai when they are together.

Jenn: When did you move out?

Jo: Ah, last, not last, on February.

Jenn: So how was your relationship with them, in... ‘cause that was first when you arrived, and you were getting used to I guess speaking English...

Jo: I spoke in English- I speak in English everyday when I was in their house. I usually talked to my home stay mom.

Jenn: Do you feel that your English improved?

Jo: Mm-hmm, yes, it was improved...a lot and then it go down...because I’m not practicing.

In a subsequent interview, I asked Jo how she felt about studying as a SEOL in a Masters programme at Memorial, and again she focused on the issue of speaking English:

Jenn: So, in your particular programme how do you feel being a student whose first language is not English? Do you think there's anything specifically about your programme that makes it, I don't know, more challenging for you, or in interacting with others in your programme, do you have a lot of group work...things like that?

Jo: Ah, right now I don't think that I have any problem with that because when I was in, in undergraduate programme I used, I studied English language, my teacher, almost all of my teacher is not Thai, so I, and I have to write the exam, I have to study from the text book, so it's not my problem. But the problem for me is the only thing is just speaking, I can understand what they say, but I cannot speak to them, I cannot explain what I am thinking...that the main problem for me.

Jo’s lack of self-efficacy in her spoken English was a major topic of discussion in the first interview. She worried a lot about her roommate, a Newfoundlander, who she had trouble understanding because of his rapid speech. However, Jo’s journal told a story of progress

in the month's following our first interview, a process facilitated by her connections to native English speakers both in her programme, and in the community. As I mentioned above, upon Jo's arrival to St. John's, she had lived with a family in the community. This experience was a source of comfort for Jo, and even after she moved out, the family continued to maintain a relationship with her. The family (identified here with pseudonyms) invited her to their home for Christmas Eve, and Jo reports the evening in her journal:

I went to [Dianne's] place this evening to have Christmas dinner with her and her family. It was nice to go back there again. I met [Tom], who is a friend of [Matthew], there. He asked me so many question since we've never talked for a while. I feel more comfortable talking with him than any one else. I wonder if that is because of his accent. He speaks a bit fast but every word is pronounce clearly. I also found myself speak quite good, too.

This experience was the first instance during the study where Jo expressed confidence in her speaking ability. She later commented that her English was improving due to her work with other native English speaking students at the university, and this event seemed significant in terms of its social context, and her own admitted success of speaking "quite good".

Jo's experience of speaking English in social contexts was often hindered in classes where students were allowed to choose their own groups for class work. In this way, group work served to alienate her from her classmates, and to position her as an outsider. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from interview three:

Canadian students prefer to be in the same group rather than being paired or grouped with international students. I said that because they did it so quickly. It is like; when the prof says we are going to work as a group, the next thing I know is they have already formed a group and I had to be group with someone that I never ever talked with.

Previously in this chapter, I described one of the participants- Inder- as having positioned himself as a *legitimate speaker* of English according to Bourdieu's (1977a) concept. In Jo's experience, she views herself a legitimate speaker, that is, a competent speaker of the language, who, despite her own acknowledgement of needing more practice, has worked very hard to reach a certain level of proficiency and deserves to be heard. However, in spite of her own self-concept, Jo is, in this case positioned as an outsider by some of the other students in the class. Through Jo's words: "Give me a chance to be one of your members," we can see how such practices of exclusion determine her opportunities for practice with students whose first language is English and who she has begun to feel comfortable talking to. She is forced to participate in a group "with someone that [she] never ever talked with", namely, other international students or students who rarely attended class, thus creating a situation where she has to start from the beginning to establish trust, feeling that she is safe to speak, and determining her position as a legitimate or illegitimate participant in the group.

Khaled's story on the other hand, reflected success in mastering English in a short time. Like many of the other participants, Khaled admits to having studied English throughout his schooling, however the majority of instruction was in reading and writing, and he felt his oral skills were lacking. His view of his spoken English at the time of our first interview revealed an air of confidence, as he felt he had overcome the obstacle of communicating in his second language in a relatively short period of time:

Well, like you notice now I speak English really good, but when I first came I wasn't like this, cause I never spoke and like I know how to read it, but I really don't know how to speak it. I never spoke to anybody, so it was really difficult at the beginning.

In this theme of self-efficacy, Liz expressed anxiety with regard to speaking English in public situations. In one instance, lack of confidence for her posed a significant risk to communication. Liz described a situation in her journal where she felt she should've voiced her opinions in order to dispel misconceptions about her country, an issue she feels very strongly about. While reading the journal, I was surprised to learn that she was discussing an evening at a professor's home that I had also attended. I did not recall specifically the issue she raised, illustrating the significance (or lack thereof) of the issue for me, a native speaker of English. I do however, recall a tension in the room at one point, but perhaps didn't acknowledge it at the time, as I was unaware of the significance of the issue for Liz. Her journal entry about that evening follows:

One thing that always stays in my mind is the night when we, all the students in [our professor's] course were invited to her house. That was wonderful night, elegant house, good food and wine. But I always feel like I made a mistake at that time. I remember at table, we talked about the youth in Canada and in China and we also talked about drug use in school. One of our Chinese girl said that if you use drug in China, you will be sentenced to death.

I can never forget the big surprise or shock written on everybody's face. This girl's statement about drug use in China is not simple true. Since China is such a big country which is undergoing big changes year by year, it is extremely difficult to describe it as a whole. I am always very careful when I am asked something about China. That girl might get that impression from some reports or media before. But as far as I know, drug use is certainly illegal. But by only taking a drug in a dancing bar, you will not be caught into prison, not to say "be sentenced to death"! I am by no means saying that doing drugs is good here. But I definitely do not want to give people the wrong impression that China is such a cruel and primitive country. I don't like the simple patriotism and it might be one of the worse things in this world. What I want is to be objective: give others the "true" information and get "true" information from others too.

See? I got all these things in my mind but what did I do at that night when I heard that piece of wrong information? I did nothing! I did not say a word even I know for most of the people at table at night, this might be among the very few chances for them to discuss that topic and that wrong impression will remain in their mind. The only thing that stopped me from speaking out is my language. I was not confident about my English at all.

Turning again to the notion of *legitimate discourse* (Bourdieu, 1977a), Bourdieu contends that the “most radical, surest, and best hidden censorships are those which exclude certain individuals from communication” (p. 648). This type of exclusion was evident in Jo’s experiences of classroom groups, and is again demonstrated in a similar academic-based situation. While Liz may have been included in the discussion during dinner, a variety of factors were important to her inability to speak out about an issue of significance to her. It is also notable that the issue was culturally motivated, and Liz’ emotionally charged response was not only a reaction to misinformation, but is also influenced by her view that she is a representative of her culture in a foreign country, and should try to eliminate stereotypes of China as “a cruel and primitive country”, and stereotypes of China in general. Norton (2000) offers, “Second language theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities second language learners have to practice the target language outside the classroom” (p. 5). In Liz’ case, practicing English is of little importance in comparison to the challenge of defending personal convictions in English. The fact that the issue was potentially controversial, and could have invoked further reaction from others is significant, as Liz would have been required to present an argument in a language she did not feel comfortable speaking out in at the time. In regard to such complex issues that may affect an individual’s ability to perform in the target language, I turn again to Norton (p. 5), who claims:

...many have assumed that learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual. (p. 5)

In the case of Liz' experience at the class dinner, her silence may have falsely suggested her shyness or inhibition to speak in general. Because I know Liz outside of class, however, I have developed a more holistic view of her as a thoughtful, complicated, and at times very talkative person. As Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight, "The key to legitimate peripherality is access by newcomers to the community of practice and all that membership entails" (p. 100). This view informs the discussions both of Jo's and Liz' experiences of being silenced not only as a result of their lack of self-efficacy in front of a group of native English speakers, but through the notion of access as a central means of legitimate participation. It is important to note that Liz' experience occurred within her second semester of her masters programme. Opportunities for Liz to practice her English at this time primarily included academic situations as her peer group consisted mainly of other Chinese students. As Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest, however, "To become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity...and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (pp. 100-1). While Liz may have had physical access to many of these resources and activities by her membership in the university community, her own feelings of inadequacy as a speaker of English interfered with her ability to speak.

In a completely different context, Sylvie, who demonstrates self-efficacy in her English abilities, describes a situation in Newfoundland where she was made aware of her English accent:

I don't think my accent is so strong, but sometimes, like not a long time ago I remember getting on the taxi, and all I said to the taxi driver was where I wanted to go, and he said, "not from here, ah?" and I thought wow is it that strong? Is it that obvious? People notice it. The way they respond, ah...yeah probably it does



influence this, but I don't see this as a barrier. I think maybe I've been living like that for a long time so, you know, I left Quebec early and it was just part of me that needed to travel and get lost a little bit in the world, to learn for myself before I go back to school. So, I think it's maybe hard for me to notice really, how it may influence people, because I'm used to having that sort of contact with people, you know?

In this case, her experiences of travelling abroad, and the fact that she's accustomed to being the outsider in other countries may contribute to her ability to see other's recognition of her accent or Otherness as a fact of life, rather than a negative classification. That is, Sylvie acknowledges that others may perceive her English as foreign or "not from here", but she maintains her self-efficacy because she is not aware of any adverse effect on the people she meets. Her self-perception of her English competency is revealed in the following statement:

My English is- I'm doing okay, although I always think I don't have that much vocabulary- but when it comes to presenting things in front of people, doing seminars and things like that and asking and answering questions, that becomes very difficult. When you have a stressful thing that becomes very difficult.

In the next chapter, Sylvie's position as a White Canadian SEOL presents an opportunity for discussion regarding her perceived legitimacy as a speaker of English, as compared to the experiences of illegitimacy communicated through Jo and Liz' narratives. While Sylvie sees her vocabulary as an area for improvement, Inder's perception of English fluency is tied to speed of speech, a notion not without irony, considering the stereotype that Newfoundland English is incomprehensible because it is too fast to understand. Inder refers again to the cashiers from rural Newfoundland:

...women come from villages, perfectly Newfie chicks I would say, when you talk to them they can't understand what the fuck you're speaking, right? You have to very much slow and speak sometimes two or three times to explain to them what you want, right? So, that way sometimes I suppose when you go to Dominion or Sobey's, when people who work there, they're from villages...and they haven't been exposed to...well people say when you go to different places in

Newfoundland, the change in language will be pretty much, you know? Sometimes Newfie's themselves don't understand what they're talking, right? Sometimes that becomes a problem, but not all the time. So, most of the time it's pretty comfortable to adjust when you talk to people.

Inder's self-efficacy in English includes the view that his speed of spoken English is a desirable attribute, further supporting his argument that his English is superior to that of some native speakers. This argument can be linked to Bourdieu's (1991a) assertion that, "The use of language...depends on the social position of the speaker" (p. 109). Inder's observations of the quality of some native speakers' spoken English serves to legitimize Standard English as a language of dominance in which Inder himself feels he has attained. The following excerpt illustrates Inder's investment in his own mastery of English:

Jenn: How do you feel about speaking English in front of your class...?

Inder: That's out of my scope because...that's not a problem, right? Because, you know, things become a problem for you when you are a different pace and the other guy's a different pace right? When pace is same, not a problem right, you sometimes speak much more faster than the other guy does...But the Newfie guys, they ask me to hey, buddy slow down, man (laughs).

Comparing his English to other students at Memorial, Inder comments:

I mean compared to a normal Canadian, like, not people who are doing their major as English, people who are doing Engineering or this stuff, when I talk to them in terms of English capability they have and I have in terms of vocabulary, not in terms of you know speed...I don't find any difference in terms of vocabulary, in terms of specialities and skills they have. The only thing is slang derived by themselves they speak, that's like someone who is drinking, they say I'm half in the bag.

Inder's studies in India were conducted in English, a primary reason for his self-efficacy with the language:

So, see had I been not that inspiration, that motivation before in my country, I wouldn't have been able to speak in such a nice way as I do here, right? Because we have learned all this stuff back home, so things are not new for us here, right.

As argued in this section, participation in English, whether social, academic or otherwise is governed by underlying rules and factors extraneous to the simple production of appropriate words and sentences. Participants shared stories of both success and debilitating challenges in the new culture, raising important questions as to the physical and symbolic access they experience in their daily lives. Their socialization into the language and culture can significantly influence the opportunities SEOLs have to speak in English, and their consequent feelings about such experiences. The theme of language socialization is further clarified in the following section, with special attention to the participants' narratives of related strategies and challenges.

#### 4.5 Language socialization: Narratives of strategies and challenges

This section clarifies the nature of SEOLs' socialization into English- an experience of significance to SEOLs, particularly those for whom this is the first native-English-speaking environment they have lived or visited. The ability of an individual SEOL to "fit in" to an English-speaking community depends not only on their ability to speak the language, but the nature of the community (e.g. a social or academic setting), and the behaviours and attitudes of members of the community (e.g. welcoming, accepting, misinformed, or exclusive). The theme emerged through participants' accounts of language learning strategies, other specific academic-related learning strategies, and challenges to mastering the language in all capacities and communicating effectively.

Language socialization "refers to the process by which children and other newcomers to a social group become socialized into the group's culture through exposure to and engagement in language-mediated social activities" (Morita, 2000). Language

socialization is linked to Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of "communities of practice" (p. 98). The authors define a community of practice as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). The socialization of SEOLs into English, and the English academic community in particular, takes place within a variety of experiences, through interaction with others, and within a multitude of contextual constraints. As Morita (2000) concludes:

..academic discourse socialization is not a predictable, entirely oppressive, unidirectional process of knowledge transmission from the expert (e.g., instructor) to the novice (e.g., student) but a complex, locally situated process that involves dynamic negotiations of expertise and identity. (p. 304)

The theme of language socialization emerged from the data in the participants' stories of language learning strategies, and challenges presented both in learning English, as well as in the process of participating in English communities. Many of the participants shared stories of opportunities to study and practice English in their home countries in a variety of contexts. They detailed a range of strategies for improving their English abilities. Some of the strategies identified in their narratives were specific, such as Sylvie's technique for preparing class presentations:

If I speak in front of a crowd in French, I don't have to learn everything off by heart because I know my subject let's say and I'm able to talk about it. But in a language that's not your first language, that becomes harder and I have to make key words, find key words that I'm gonna learn off by heart so that I'm able to keep a flow when I speak in front of people in English otherwise I always end up getting stuck and saying...you know I wanna say something and it didn't come out the way I want and that's something that's that's I think very common to people that don't speak English as a first language. And that's something that ah English, native English people and like professors and things like that will not necessarily understand.

Morita (2000), in her study of both native and nonnative TESL graduate students', argues that, "common academic oral activities such as [oral academic presentations] can constitute powerful and rich resources of discourse socialization and academic apprenticeship" (p. 305-6). Sylvie's acknowledgement of public speaking as a source of stress in her language socialization highlights an area where the university can increase its support for SEOLs. Sylvie points out that the problem is "common", and that she feels there is a lack of understanding from native speakers and professors. Her personal development of strategies for dealing with the pressures of delivering academic presentations demonstrates her socialization into her community of practice in education, and provides insight into her experience as a SEOL graduate student.

Other participants pointed to specific courses or programmes as a means of learning English. Khaled's first experience studying in an English environment was when he attended a university in Alberta:

Actually in Alberta....I took a comprehensive course...My course advisor was telling me, no your English is very good, don't waste your time. And I told him no, I'm going to pay for it, don't worry about it- I need it. So I took it was very useful, but like everyday ah, six hours, for two-three months. Yeah, it was really good, I realize I mean it really [improved] my English cause I have to speak with everybody in English.

Sylvie attended high school in Australia for one year- an experience that she says helped her with her spoken English:

My year in Australia was good for me for writing English. The thing is in English in Quebec we learn a lot of grammar, and not so much speaking- in my time, in my generation. So, when I arrived in Australia, the, I followed the same curriculum as all the other grade 12 students, and the English teacher was actually impressed by my writing, but I had learned more writing than speaking in Quebec. The grammar part is very good, but I think the speaking is not so much...So writing has always been, yeah relatively easy for me. I think also because when you go from a Latin language to English, it's so much less complicated- the grammar, so it's good for me.

Hunter maintains that learning theoretical aspects of English at the university level was helpful for him:

Another experience was like, when I started to study English at university and I was doing a course in Linguistics, which...makes you familiar with theoretical concepts about language and stuff. It bored the shit out of me, but...basically it helps you learn how language works...

For Liz, working in a job that required her to use English, and socializing in English in an informal way were both factors that contributed to her progress in English:

Liz: I came to Beijing to work there cause I'm an editor in ah, text book area-English text book area, so basically I read English everyday, and write and talk about it, so that make- made me, make a little bit progress too. And then I found some friends from Australia and English speaking countries and they...made a conversation group...just personal, they are friends.

Jenn: They were studying Chinese?

Liz: Yeah, yeah...and we met in the bar or cafeteria and we talked about...for half an hour we talked in Chinese and the other half an hour talking English, and the other half an hour we drink and talk, just for fun...it's not a formal, it's just we are just friends and going to have fun and have ah, some improvement both in Chinese and English, and I think that helped me a little bit, especially for my spoken English.

Hunter also created learning opportunities in English through his interest in British music. He suggests this strategy helped him improve his English, and through our interviews I was able to detect a slight British accent in his pronunciation as well as through his use of British slang. He commented on how the music helped him learn:

I started to listen to music when I was 16 or so and since I was always interested in British pop music and British rock...I listened to very few records in German, in German language. So most of the music I listened to was in English and yeah...it expands your vocabulary, it helps you to understand pronunciation and stuff.

In regard to challenges in language learning, Sylvie commented that learning the technical aspects of languages is particularly difficult for her, as she is primarily an auditory learner, and relies on her listening skills for learning:

I loved languages, but learning grammar and all these things is very difficult for me because I'm very, I work a lot with my ears when I learn a language.

While Sylvie is confident in her English abilities, she admits that presenting in class is still a major challenge for her:

For me, it's still difficult, I'm doing good, but it's still difficult to do seminars in English because when there's a stress element it doesn't come out as...things don't flow right.

While Jo believes herself to be a competent communicator in English, she highlights a particular challenge with communicating in English because of her pronunciation. She told this story in a journal entry:

When I first arrived here I have just little problem about communicating with other people. I think this is because I had experience using English for 5 years during I was studying in university in Thailand. Anyhow, I do have problem pronouncing some words, especially the one spelling with "r" and "v". There was one time that I had to explain something about one tradition in Thailand, Loy-Kratong, in which we had to float the floating basket, Kratong, in the river to show our respect to god who is taking care of the river. It took me about five or six times to pronounce the word "River". Finally, I ended up spelling that word for all of them.

In addition to pronunciation, Jo also finds listening problematic, and again the issue of rural Newfoundland English is raised:

The other language problem that I have faced during spending my life here is when I have to listen to some Newfoundlander, especially one who came from outside St. John's. I find that they speak with some kind of accent and they all really fast so sometimes I cannot catch even one word from them.

Jo also reports on problems with understanding her professor, and in the following journal entry illustrates this challenge with comprehension. When faced with a

particularly difficult subject in which she has little background, Jo maintains that rapid speaking combined with this lack of background knowledge of the subject contribute to her disconnectedness from and disinterest with the course:

The prof. of this subject is actually my supervisor. I've never had any problem listening to his accent until I have to take this course with him. I find that he speaks very fast and this is my first time that I have due with [this] stuff. I feel this course is very boring because the only thing I can do is to copy the lecture from the blackboard. The thing goes though when I have to catch his speech and the theory that I've never had any background at the same time.

She relates this frustration in class to her experiences with her English-speaking roommate. Jo finds communicating with her roommate particularly problematic because of his fast speech, and their lack of common interests:

This might be the same kind of problem that happens to me when I have to listen to the history of rock from [my roommate from Newfoundland].

This discussion of strategies and challenges in the language socialization of SEOLs is significant in the context of institutional and academic support. Based on the learning strategies highlighted by the participants, such as enrolling in English courses or ESL programmes, and developing techniques for public academic speaking, the university and the individual members of the university community can witness the ways pedagogy and course offerings are perceived and utilized by SEOLs at Memorial University.

Issues related to the challenges in speaking, and language socialization in English are further problematized in chapter five where the connection between language socialization and cultural stereotyping is explored. Language socialization is linked to the bigger picture of English in a global context, and the reasons why SEOLs initially begin to study English. In the next section, the theme of dominance of English in a global



context is presented. Some of the participants discussed English as an inevitability for them and others, particularly in the context of higher education.

#### 4.6 “The language that links everybody right now” (Sylvie): Inevitability of learning English

In this study the issue of English as an international language has been raised both by participants and in the review of the literature. This section explicates the ways two of the participants view English as an international, or global language, and as an imperative, or educational prerequisite.

One concept I came across in my reading that I found particularly noteworthy is that of English as a *native scholarly language*. Flowerdew (2000) problematizes the use of the native/nonnative speaker dichotomy to represent a much more complex range of competencies in language. Part of this argument posits, “English is the native scholarly language of many scholars internationally even though it is not strictly speaking their mother tongue; it is the language they have been educated in and the language in which they conduct a great part of their scholarly activity” (p. 146).

Some of the participants referred to English as unavoidable, particularly for those in scientific areas of study. For example, Sylvie comments, “I did all my undergraduate work in French, but I was in Science, and when you are in Science, you cannot avoid English anyhow...” She explains that for her, as a French speaker, using English for scientific writing is much easier:

...‘cause so much of the literature is in English, and so much so...when I did these two last courses for my undergraduate degree...I was very scared because I had to write papers, and I was thinking all these things, right, and actually I was surprised because it wasn’t that hard at all because all the literature review you

have to do to write a paper in Science is always English, even if you study in French, so it's actually easier to use the same vocabulary than to translate sometimes, because you have to translate if you want to cite people. So I've been finding it really good and even to the point that I'm thinking now, if I would have to write a thesis in Science in French I would find it very hard...because you...see I went to a conference two weeks ago and we had to translate the abstracts and everything...and it's very, very hard because French is no language for Science, it's very good for Literature, but for Science you end up having to, when you write you have to translate expressions that you would never use in French anyhow (laughing), but just because it has to be written in French, you make up these things...and yeah...

This view is explained in Fishman (1992), who argues, "French is widely viewed as more beautiful, musical, pleasant, rhythmic, refined, intimate, pure, soothing, graceful, tender, and lovely, but English is viewed as richer, more precise, more logical, more sophisticated, and more competence related" (p. 24). He adds, "In a world where economic technical superiority is what really counts, the heightened aesthetic-affective image of French smacks of weakness, innocence, and triviality" (p. 24).

Inder posits the inevitability of learning English as a fact he took for granted since birth:

So the basic idea that came from modern society is of course I knew when I was born when I was studying that I would have to learn [in] Canada and the United States.

Inder echoes Sylvie's sentiments regarding English in Science, arguing, "Nobody can ever dream of doing [Sciences] in Hindi. Seriously...They won't be able to do it." While the political contexts for Sylvie (a French Canadian) and Inder (from India) may at first sight appear vastly different, there are in fact some parallels to be drawn between India and Quebec. Connections can be made between the histories of bilingualism in the two regions by referring to Gaardner's (1977) work on folk bilingualism. Folk bilingualism refers to bilingualism by necessity, that is, "the result of contact between ethnic groups

and competition within a single state, where one of the peoples becomes bilingual involuntarily to survive” (Paulston & Tucker, 2003, p. 462). In the following excerpt, Inder provides a brief history of colonialism in India to illustrate the hegemony of English as an explanation for his knowledge that he would have to eventually study in Canada or the United States:

English came to India because English Britishers [*sic*] were there. They were in India for 250 years; they just mingled in the sand of India. They used to rule police inspectors, army men...everything was English, everybody used to understand English because they had to you know, bear the brunt of a normal policeman who was an Englishman, but he was kicking the ass of a Indian. So how would they understand if they don't speak English? So the guy was supposed to understand a little from what he's saying, and he was supposed to say a little, and his family was supposed to say, the newly born child was supposed to say. So he had a mentality that my child should [know] some complete English. Things started coming from there and English became a part of everybody's life so...

He goes on to assert that English is a part of globalization, reiterating the necessity of learning English:

...and globalization is a word, you want to trade somewhere, you want to go for interview somewhere, everything is going to happen in English. You're supposed to learn English I would say...

Sylvie again comments on the unavoidability and the “reality” of speaking English when explaining her decision to educate her young daughter in French. She considers:

...her father and I still think it would be better for her to learn French first just because, like I was saying before French is more complicated to write, you know, so if she learns this when she's little, 'cause it's so easy for them when they're little, like they just pick it up so fast- we think if she learns this, because she will speak English anyway in her life, because today it is the reality.

She continues, emphasizing the notion of English as the universal or international language, stating:

I mean if she's going to have an average human being life, she will speak English, because you know it's just the language that links everybody right now. So might

as well give her an education in another language...that's the way we feel right now.

As a result of Inder's socialization into English, and his extensive experiences in studying and communicating in English on a daily basis, Inder regards English as part of his identity. His use of his actual mother tongue has declined significantly; to the point where he now considers English his mother tongue:

So when you talk to me in terms of my language, in terms of English, so basically my mother tongue, like now I know it very well and of course there must be reasons it came to me, you know what prompted me to learn this language.

While this statement surprised me, since my study required students whose mother tongue is not English, Inder was obviously speaking metaphorically. He elucidated his view, emphasizing:

I can't imagine my existence without knowing English. It has become so much...there is a word in English, I forgot how to say it, you know? Things without which you can't imagine yourself, there is a word for that. I don't know I forgot it. My existence is beyond comprehension without English, right? I can't express...how do you think yourself without English?

This view mirrors Flowerdew's (2000) observation that a SEOL, such as Inder can conceive of English as their mother tongue or one of their native languages, while others may perceive their English to be non-standard or even substandard. The comments rendering English as inevitable for some SEOLs in the study illustrate the view that English is essential, particularly for academics, and more specifically in Science-related fields.

One of the participants who attributed somewhat less significance to the importance of English in her life was Liz, who asserted in a journal entry:

English does have its importance in this society nowadays. If I have never learned English, maybe I could not go to an English speaking country as Canada. Going abroad and meet different people coming from different cultural background might

help you open your eyes and maybe become more open-minded, if you are lucky and have the ability to think and understand what you are experiencing. But it is not necessary for a travelling person be more open-minded. Likewise, it is not necessary for a person who does not know English and stays at his/her hometown all of his/her life to be more narrow-minded.

I guess I am trying to say that English is English. If I never learn English, then my life will be different in the fact that I never learn English. I don't want to exaggerate the importance of English by unnecessarily relate English studying with other aspects of life. The story is different from one person to another.

This section pointed to the positioning of English as an international or global language, and illustrated through the participants' narratives how this is interpreted by these SEOLs. Generally, the two participants quoted in this section appear to have accepted and welcomed English as a necessary language and as an enabler to their communication in international contexts. The result of learning to speak English as a means of increasing one's opportunities for intercultural communication emerged through the theme of status and access, and is explored in the next section.

#### 4.7 Status and access for English speakers

This section explores the notion of English as a signifier of intelligence and privilege, and the ways English affords those who speak it a certain status, and access to international higher education, or more lucrative employment, and general positive social associations.

Previously, in section 4.3 of this chapter, I cited Inder to demonstrate his perceptions of dialects of English, and the status of those who speak a particular variety of English, namely rural Newfoundland women, who may or may not in reality, be from rural areas at all. Inder's comments about the status of grocery store cashiers, and the quality of their English, while potentially indicative of ignorance and unfounded bias, is

not intended to suggest he is prejudiced toward rural Newfoundlanders. His comments, do, in fact reveal a well-documented phenomenon in the area of socio-linguistics. For example, Haugen (2003) defines dialect as “a term that suggests informal or lower-class or rural speech” (p. 413). As Thornborrow (1999) considers, “the ability to speak a language can either enable or restrict access to social and institutional structures, privileging one community of speakers over another” (p. 148). This is reflected in Inder’s comment:

In India the perception is people who speak English are much more learned, they are much more sensible, they are much more smart because of course not everybody can speak English in India, right?

Inder also considers the varieties of English spoken by other Indians from different regions and economic classes of India, evidencing that his critique extends to all speakers of English, and not only so called rural Newfoundlanders:

I noticed this back home too- people who are from good families, when they try to speak English, they tend to speak in a much better way as compared to people who are from mediocre families and who are from lower-middle class families, when they try to speak in English of course their accent is not as fine as me...

He continues this explanation to characterize the fluency of other Indians attending Memorial University as contingent upon their socio-economic status:

Same thing when students come here from- means I’m not saying in a bad way, I’m just telling you what happens...- students who come here for their undergrad or Masters who are from middle-class families or lower-middle class families, when you listen to them their accent will be a little you know...weird...it will be really slow, it will be difficult for me sometimes to understand what they are saying. Of course they will be saying in a much more you know clear way, but it will be very much slow, a little like Chinese [SEOLs]. And they also think once in their mind what to express, what to say, so...I would say in India the better English depends upon the better family.

Despite Inder’s own experience with language learning, his position as a SEOL, and, arguably a speaker of a non-standard variety of English, his tendency to characterize

the English of other students from his country as sub-standard because of their economic status tends to evoke colonialist impressions. The construction of Self versus Other is a colonialist practice (see Pennycook, 1998), and is witnessed in Inder's Othering based on socio-economic status. As Pennycook (1998) argues, colonialism is a "site of cultural production" of "cultural forms" that "produced European culture" (p. 16). Considering Inder's view that "you're supposed to learn English", it appears that he identifies with the language of the colonizers, further advancing the native speaker construct, and in a sense delegitimizing his own position as a Speaker of English as an Other Language. Earlier work highlighting this phenomenon is presented in Fanon (1968), who, speaking as a "Negro of the Antilles" (p. 16), speaks to the issue of colonization, arguing: "A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question..." (p. 17). Colonization is also depicted in Fanon's assertion that:

There is a psychological phenomenon that consists of the belief that the world will open to the extent to which frontiers are broken down. Imprisoned on his island, lost in an atmosphere that offers not the slightest outlet, the Negro breathes in this appeal of Europe like pure air. (p. 21)

The connection between Fanon's description of colonialism, and the "appeal of Europe" (p. 21) is intended to illustrate Inder's investment in English as a language of status and access. According to Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998):

From what one can see in the Indian subcontinent, the victims who say they are victimized are a part of the culture of complaint, and are really fascinated and lured by power and the Western way of life. That section of the population, the English urban elite, have become the colonizers though they were the colonized under the British rulers. (p. 57)

While Inder did not explicitly claim victimization by English, he has apparently invested in a colonial discourse whereby English is a language that connects and empowers, particularly in the context of higher education.

This section elaborated on one participant's views on the status and access gained through learning English. Literature highlighting the problematic, and historically and politically situated nature of these views supports the analysis that Othering is perpetuated long after colonization has occurred. This highly politicized view of English prepares for the following discussion of the complex nature of the English language and what it means to participate in a language community, particularly one with such a long history of dominance and politically motivated proliferation. While many view English as a medium of communication, I locate other literature that argues language is more than a medium, and rather, it is a complex social exchange, highly dependent on historically situated discourses and social factors.

#### 4.8 Communication through English

To gain a better understanding of the experiences of SEOLs, it is necessary to take a closer look at the concept of English as an (or *the*) international or universal language, and to examine the interaction and mediation of language in social contexts. This section examines participants' conceptions of English as a means of communication through their own experiences with the language. Perspectives from related literature are presented as a means of providing alternative views and critically framed observations that illuminate the participants' comments in order to offer support for, or alternatives to their current beliefs.



McLaren and Giroux (1997) argue, “language constitutes reality rather than merely reflects it. Language in this case is not conceptualized as a transparent window to the world but rather as a symbolic medium that actively refracts, shapes, and transforms the world” (p. 21). In regard to the view of English as the international language, Kubota (2002) suggests, “The symbolic power attached to English as the international language reinforces the perceived superiority of English over other languages” (p. 20). In this study, communication between the participants and myself was mediated through our knowledge of English. The practice of intercultural communication through English is discussed in Kachru (1994):

When we call English a global medium, it means that those who use English across cultures have a shared code of communication. And the result of this shared competence is that, in spite of various types of cultural differences, we believe that we communicate with each other- one use of English with another, a Nigerian with an Indian, a Japanese with a German, and a Singaporean with an American. It is in this broad sense of interlocutors that we have one language and many voices. (p. 2)

While this “shared code” (p. 2) facilitates communication across cultures, the native-nonnative construct often precludes the type of interaction that is established through this code. As Nayar (1994) observes, “Generation of applied linguistic mythmaking in the indubitable superiority and the impregnable infallibility of the ‘native speaker’ has created stereotypes that die hard” (p. 4). This is why it is important to explore the types of experiences that SEOLs have in an English environment, as their individual competence in the language does not alone determine how they are received, particularly those students speaking non-standard or new varieties of English.

In the following interview excerpt, Inder uncritically depicts English as the means by which people from different cultures communicate ideas and concepts:

See this is an era of globalization. You know what globalization is? [Jenn: Yup.] Globalization means breaking borders, coming close like suppose the rest of the world has been globalized and the Indians are in a state of globalization, what is the first thing that needs to be reviewed? You need to understand people, more about their...side of the lake, what they're speaking. So what is the medium right...that is English.

Communication through English, however, is not simply the engagement of speakers through a shared code. Sylvie captures this misconception in her recollection of personal experiences with people, and the significance of language in her relationships with these people. She describes experiencing a certain discomfort when a professor with whom she had always communicated in English- her supervisor- suddenly began using French to talk to Sylvie. She described the experience in one of our interviews:

Sylvie: ...my supervisor, she studied in [Quebec], I think she's originally from [another province], but she lived in [Quebec] a long time, so she does speak and understand French really well. But sometimes she just comes up to me and starts talking in French because she always tells me she thinks she should practice (laughing). And I find it really weird to communicate with her in French, it's actually hard for me. Yeah...

Jenn: ...because you feel that she's not getting everything, or, what makes it weird?

Sylvie: No, I think she's getting everything, but I don't know it's just different, you know.

Sylvie went on to explain a similar situation with a friend:

It's like if you have a very good friend, like I have for example a very good friend that I met in Australia and she was from Switzerland and she's been doing all her undergrad studies and everything in French....and now she speaks French almost better than English because she only spoke English when she was in Australia, but it's still very difficult for us to communicate with each other in French because we just knew each other in English. And it's the same thing with my supervisor, everything has always been English, and now she's starting sometimes because she wants to speak to me in French, and I think it's very nice, but it's difficult because the...there's a different relationship, ah?

While she cannot point to the specific reason for this discomfort in language switching, Sylvie is very clear that it affects the nature of the communication with a person:

Whatever language, when you switch language with a person, it's a different contact, I don't know how to explain it, but it's a different contact so that when it's someone you've known really well in one language, it's totally, if you switch, it's very strange. I don't know how to explain it, but I do think that the language you communicate with also defines the contact, the type of contact you have with the person. You probably know what I mean if you lived in Japan, you know, the Japanese mentality is so different from ours and that's expressed in the language also, like words that don't exist in their language, and things like that. That sort of thing is what I'm referring to.

Jenn: Because language is not just language...

Sylvie: Noooo, it's not just a form of communication, it's also a way to establish contact, and it sort of defines the first contact we have with other persons, or first impressions.

In this narrative of personal communication through particular languages, Sylvie appears to perceive her professor as a non-legitimate speaker of French, or an *imposter* (Bourdieu, 1977a). The notion of the imposter comes from Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of "legitimate discourse" (p. 650), and the four conditions for legitimate discourse. It is the first condition for the legitimate speaker to be seen as an appropriate speaker. While Sylvie's professor might speak French correctly or adequately, Sylvie does not feel comfortable communicating with her in her first language because their relationship has been established in English, and therefore the communicative act is viewed as unnatural.

These experiences of SEOLs in the study provide a view of the interaction between language and those who speak it. As Norton Peirce (1993) asserts, "Language is not just a neutral form of communication, but a practice that is socially constructed in the hegemonic events, practices, and processes that constitute daily life- the practices that are considered 'normal' by the dominant society" (p. 198). Addressing the issue of what this

internationalization of English means for those who learn it, Cameron (2002) examines the issue of global communication, emphasizing the tendency towards a “wholesale levelling” of cultural differences in order to impose more standardized ways of thinking for the facilitation of global communication. She asserts:

It is those ‘deeper’ differences that need to be levelled if global communication is to be effective. Hence the recommendation that, for instance, Japanese students should learn to write Japanese in accordance with Western norms of ‘logic’, or that Japanese businesspeople should adopt more ‘direct’ or ‘informal’ ways of interacting among themselves. On the surface, this approach preserves linguistic diversity, but at a deeper level the effect is to make every language into a vehicle for the affirmation of similar values and beliefs, and for the enactment by speakers of similar social identities and roles. Language becomes a global product available in different local flavours. (p. 70)

In order to preserve linguistic diversity *in addition to* cultural pluralism, it is necessary to examine the nature of cultural experiences of SEOLs in English-speaking environments. The interaction between culture and language, and the ways SEOLs are encouraged or discouraged to demonstrate their values and beliefs are important factors in their intercultural socialization. This section elucidated the problematic nature of the view that language is a neutral code of communication through which ideas are expressed in an uncomplicated manner. Linguistic diversity is an issue that deserves attention in English-speaking academic and social communities, as illustrated in this section and throughout the chapter. Cultural diversity is another issue requiring investigation, and the culturally-related experiences of SEOLs are explored in the next chapter.

#### 4.9 Conclusion

Chapter four explored the themes that emerged from the participants' contributions. It linked their experiences to related issues in the literature on language learning, culture, and the intersection of both. Although this chapter explored some of the relationships between language and culture, the primary focus was on issues that were raised by participants specifically in regard to language learning. The hegemonic nature of English, and the social context of language learning in an English-speaking environment were introduced and will be elaborated in chapter five, which addresses issues linked more directly with culture. The main issues addressed in this chapter include: the complex nature of English and the problematic assumptions accompanying accent, dialect, standard, and world Englishes; the complicated process of learning a language, and the conditions required to communicate in that language; the status and access afforded or inhibited by speaking English or a variety of English; and the complexity of English itself as a means of communication and as a language of dominance and perceived superiority. Chapter five follows the same format as chapter four in that it includes a discussion of the participants' narratives, interpretations, and related literature. As in this chapter, chapter five presents six themes from both the participants' interviews and journals, including: SEOLs, Newfoundland, and the local people: some perceptions; comparing home and host cultures; challenges to cross-cultural adjustment; the role of support in cross-cultural adjustment; stereotypes and generalizations; and discourses of difference and Othering.

## CHAPTER 5: CULTURE AND ADJUSTMENT

*The primary function of myth is to validate an existing social order. Myth enshrines conservative social values, raising tradition on a pedestal. It expresses and confirms, rather than explains or questions, the sources of cultural attitudes and values...Because myth anchors the present in the past it is a sociological charter for a future society which is an exact replica of the present one.*

Ann Oakley, *Women's Work: The housewife, past and present* (1974)  
cited in Lippi-Green

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter integrates perspectives from the six participants related to culture and adjustment that emerged from their interviews and journals. The themes and patterns located in the participants' narratives provide insight into issues of culture and adjustment as Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language (SEOLs). These two distinct, but interrelated constructs are prevalent in literature on language learning and intercultural experiences, as discussed in chapter two. The themes covered in this chapter include: SEOLs, Newfoundland, and the local people: some perceptions; comparing home and host cultures; challenges to cross-cultural adjustment; the role of support in cross-cultural adjustment; stereotypes and generalizations; and discourses of difference and Othering. The inclusion of the opening epigraph in this chapter is intended to set the scene for the recurring underlying themes of myth, misunderstanding, and misinformation raised by the participants throughout this chapter. The function of myth in this context serves to enable perpetuation of false or misleading information, and is a vehicle for the prevention of cross-cultural understanding, acceptance, and dialogue. The chapter begins with an overview of the concepts of culture and adjustment, not as a theme arrived upon in the

analysis, but as a means to introduce perspectives from the literature on culture and adjustment.

## 5.2 Perspectives of culture and adjustment

This section introduces the notion of cultural difference and how it relates to the participants in this study. Utilizing a postmodern frame, difference is presented as an evolving and non-essentialized construct that resists the tendency to polarize differences between cultures and individual members of cultures. Postmodernism offers a vision of culture as a construct “that is highly dependent on context, that defers conclusions. [and] that relies on (un)decidability...” (Guilherme, 2002, p. 117). Cultural difference, a notion sometimes overemphasized in language education as a polarized, factual representation (see Kubota, 2002) is addressed through postmodernism, as described by Guilherme (2002):

Postmodern cultural critique negates the perception of difference as composed of opposing, self-contained ends that may come closer together or farther apart but never cross. Difference is fluid, but constructed through struggle, and it results from the interaction between power and cultural truths. Cultural difference is acknowledged in the public sphere and is not limited to private spaces. It is not treated as exotic, instead, its very existence is considered commonplace because each one of us is partially the Other. Postmodern cultural critique discards any one cultural model as essentially prevalent over the others. (p. 117)

I find this description useful in its consideration of cultural difference as “commonplace” and “fluid” (p. 117). Within a postmodern framework, an individual’s identity is seen as fragmented and can, at times, be conflicted. The participants in this study were, by their inclusion in the study, positioned as SEOLs. However, throughout the process of getting to know them, and listening to their experiences, I witnessed a polyphony of identity

where participants were at times represented in their stories as the Other, and at times appeared to engage in Othering.

The purpose of this section was to offer a brief introduction to the notion of difference that sets the stage for the analysis presented in this chapter. This study attempts to present an alternative vision of difference, not as a means to position the participants as different than me, or to present SEOLs as a monolithic body different from those identified as native-speakers-of-English, but rather to highlight the similarities and the differences between the participants' narratives, and to demonstrate the diversity within each of those students' experiences as a SEOL. In some cases, I highlight similarities between their stories to illustrate intersections and commonalities, not to present a generalized view of the experiences of all SEOLs, but merely to manage the data in a coherent manner. In the next section, I explore the theme that deals with how the participants see their new environment, and the people in this setting, and how other members of the new environment sometimes respond to SEOLs.

### 5.3 SEOLs, Newfoundland, and the local people: Some perceptions

This section introduces some perceptions the participants shared about Newfoundland and the local people. Some of the narratives illustrate the ways in which misinformation becomes a taken-for-granted assumption. In addition, the issue of lack of knowledge between the cultures of the participants and those from Newfoundlanders and other Canadian students also emerged through this theme. I begin with an introduction to common stereotypes of Newfoundlanders based on my own observations and experiences.



As a Newfoundlander, I am cognizant of the reputation that often precedes me. Non-Newfoundlanders who've been to the island- and those who haven't ever been here- might tell you we're friendly, that we know how to party, and above all, we are the have-nots of the Canadian political and economic landscape. As problematic as these assumptions are, they are prevalent throughout Canada, and I have even met people from outside the country with the very same generalizations and expectations about the people of this province. But what do SEOLs from outside the province or country expect when they come to St. John's? And, perhaps more importantly, what impressions are formed after they've lived here for a while? This theme of SEOLs' perceptions of the province and the local people emerged from the participants' narratives.

In the interviews with participants it became evident that the "friendly Newfoundlander" image had been accepted by many of these SEOLs. Inder, who has even taken to using "Newfie"- a term that may be considered derogatory when used by anyone who is not from the island- said of St. John's: "Friendly people, nice place, small place..." He attributes this friendliness to the slower pace of the province, as opposed to his opinion of mainland Canada as much more demanding and fast-paced. He associates mainland Canada with more densely populated cities than St. John's:

People say Newfoundlanders are much more friendly, and I can see how mainlanders will be [less friendly] because, you know, it's much more busy place, there are many more things to do, even travelling is more difficult, you have to go from your work, to office it takes two hours, so you don't have time to care for, for anyone, right? People are much more self-centred, they're much more task-oriented, but here place is short, you can talk to people, you have a little more time, right, you can entertain, you can talk to anybody. So that way, people from this state are much more...nice and friendly, as compared to people would have been had I been in mainland.

Inder expressed that he enjoyed living in St. John's, and also mentioned that, if not for the lack of available employment in this province, he might consider staying here to live:

...you see, this place doesn't offer you a job, cause there are no industries, right? So, had I got into possibly do work in Newfoundland, I would love to work here, instead of go to mainland, if that gives me the money, right? That's a consideration.

While Inder's views of Newfoundland did not appear to change throughout the study, Jo's perceptions of the local people went from a sweeping generalization at the beginning of the study: "people here is really nice" to a re-examination of this view in a journal entry later in the study: "Not all people here are nice like I was thinking", a view arrived upon through an encounter Jo had in the community, and which is presented in chapter one where Jo is first introduced.

It became apparent through the analysis of the interviews and journals that although the women in the study answered my questions about their experiences with exactly that- narratives of their experiences and specific events in their lives, the male participants were reluctant to provide such personal accounts, and preferred to speak in generalities. While I do not offer a full-fledged gender analysis in this study, I feel it is salient that the men and women participated in different ways and therefore point to this difference as merely an observation. The men often produced narratives of self-assurance and confidence in their ability to adjust, and rarely discussed their personal experiences as individuals. For example, when I asked Inder about his adjustment to life in Newfoundland, he maintained he did not experience any sort of culture shock because of the accessibility of information, and immediately turns to an analysis of small versus big cities:

...these days it's everybody knows what's happening in the US what's happening in Europe, right, so the [Newfoundland] culture wasn't new to me, you know what happens in these countries because, you know, I'm open to the culture that is new to me, but if you go to US, and if you go to the rest of the parts of Canada that are much more populated, of course like some big cities in India- traffic, pollution, everything, more people, nobody cares for you, right? They don't bother who you are, what you are doing, right? But when you go, it works for every place in the world, when you go to small place, people are much more friendly, everybody knows each other, like...kind of ideal social system, like it bothers you what somebody are doing, but you are concerned if, you know...they are much more friendly. So that works for St. John's too.

Hunter took a different approach in describing his view of St. John's, and tells about his first reaction upon seeing the city from his airplane seat. Like Inder, Hunter asserts coming to St. John's "was no culture shock". He presents his perception in a slightly detached, mechanistic manner, pointing to physical attributes of the city, without placing himself in the picture:

Hunter: I think Newfoundlanders may think that they are not Canadians, and they are not Americans and all that stuff, but um, just like other American cities I think St. John's is built for cars and not for people, because European cities are very narrow and very compact because they have been growing over centuries. St. John's is...how old is it...200 years, 250? It's just- car culture is visible everywhere. It takes you 30 minutes to walk to the next shopping mall or take a bicycle...

Jenn: That's interesting.

Hunter: When we approached St. John's in the aircraft, it was like...I had read before that St. John's had about 100,000 people- population. And um, from above St. John's looked like a huge city by European standards because everyone seems to have it's own house, to have their own house and stuff. In terms of size it's pretty huge, in terms of population it's pretty small, so that's the American city everything is wide spread out. That's the way it is.

When I tried to dig deeper, Hunter responded with reference to the historical interest of the province, and a severe criticism of the people of Newfoundland, again comparing them with Americans:

Well, I think coming from Europe, Newfoundland is a very interesting area because it's the oldest corner of the North American continent...on the other hand they are very American...like for instance they are fat, that's correct? Well, not everyone is fat, but there are a lot of overweight people.

Like Inder, Hunter maintains he did not experience problems adjusting upon his arrival, and says while he is aware of stereotypes of Canadians, he himself held no stereotypes of the local people prior to coming to this province: "I didn't have stereotypes, but many people don't distinguish between Americans and Canadians. They're all Americans in the eyes of people who haven't been abroad."

In his second year living here, Inder has reached this conclusion of Newfoundlanders:

Inder: ...and people from Newfoundland I would say, they don't even go to mainland, I come across people who have never been to after...

Jenn: Really?

Inder: Well, most of the time, I would say. Very few people have been to outside Newfoundland. Some people haven't even gone to outside St. John's!

The indication from this small sample of men points to a very traditional view of masculinity, one that invests in objectivity, practicality, and detachment. Or, in Theroux's (1985/1992) words: "[Being a man]...means: Be stupid, be unfeeling, obedient, soldierly and stop thinking" (p. 316). The men in this study painted a portrait of knowledge- e.g. Inder's assertion that nothing in the new culture is new to him because he knew what to expect before his arrival; objectivity- e.g. Hunter's description of Others as fact; and self-efficacy in English- e.g. Khaled's assessment of his own rapid improvement in English. The following excerpt from Liz demonstrates the ways in which the women participants often engaged in describing their perceptions through greater emphasis on personal feelings associated with change. While she did not comment on culture shock

specifically, I felt that her response included more clues to her adjustment as a SEOL than the responses gleaned from conversations with the male participants:

...moving from China to Canada, from Beijing to St. John's is a major transition for me. I need to learn more about English and Canadian culture in order to get a smooth transition. And I get a great chance to observe myself, to think things from different perspectives, to observe different people from different culture, to compare my old thinking with new ones. I did noticed my mentally change in terms of logic and critical thinking. But I think those came from graduate level study, not necessarily from the life in Canada or St. John's.

The gender differences observed in this small sample of SEOLs suggest a possibility for further research in this area. Exploration of the questions of whether gender is a factor in the experiences of SEOLs can further advance knowledge of how SEOLs experience the new culture in diverse and complex ways. According to Code (1995): "Gender may, in some instances prove irrelevant to a particular finding or turn out to be a less significant contributor than, say, race or class: but ordinarily its irrelevance can be claimed only after careful investigation" (p. 34). While gender analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is recommended for future research with SEOLs.

This section included the above excerpts to demonstrate some of the views the participants hold about Newfoundland and the local people. While some of the participants' views are misinformed, such as Inder's statement that "very few people" have even left the island, some participants observed that Newfoundlanders, too, have demonstrated misinformation or lack of information about the home countries or cultures of SEOLs. For example, I asked Inder about the kinds of questions people here ask him about his home country:

Jenn: Do people here ask you about your home country? What types of questions do Newfoundlanders ask you about India?

Inder: Well, people know about India but they don't know much. Well, there is a lot of Indian population in rest of Canada, I mean mainland. But there are not very many Indians here. So, basically Newfie people are more kind of in their own and don't know much about rest of the world actually. But I never found actually people so much curious about India. Like you will normally expect, this is a globalized world so things are not that new for people.

Liz also commented on this issue, indicating possible reasons for such a lack of information:

People here sometime ask me about China and my hometown. Most of them are not knowledgeable about them. For example, some of them think products from China are cheaper because of the usage of child labour; arranged marriage is popular in China; Chinese are all peasants; Chinese only ride bicycles, and so on. But these are all understandable. First, all the media, Chinese ones and Canadian ones, have their own tendencies. Certain kind of news has been repeated for too many times and the fact has been exaggerated and distorted. Second, China is such a big and complicated country and is very hard to understand even for a Chinese. I believe in understanding between people can help build a better world. International students, as part of the inter-country communication can serve as a bridge between different cultures.

Jo, too, has experienced a similar situation:

Most [Newfoundlanders] ask me about Thailand, especially the people in my Tae kwon-do class because I am the only foreigner in the class. They seem to be interested about my hometown because some of them have relative or friends working over there (usually as a teacher) and they heard that it is a beautiful country. I don't think they know much about it and sometimes they kind of confuse between China and Thailand.

This type of experience was also expressed in a campus newsletter (Pecore, 1996) in which an international student at Memorial University was interviewed. The student, from Africa, shared this experience, and commented: "The questions people were asking, you felt like they were a bit ignorant, like 'Where did you learn to speak English?' 'Do you wear clothes at home?' It kind of upset me a lot. I think people have a really bad picture of what Africa is supposed to be like" (§ 4). In this study, the participants' experiences of such ignorance are significant as they indicate a major barrier to

intercultural communication. Similarly, such ignorance of Other cultures on the part of native speakers suggests the positioning of SEOLs as Other in a way that belittles them and their cultures as unworthy of attention from the dominant cultures. Like chapter four, where language related practices were identified as legitimizing or delegitimizing the spoken English of SEOLs, this lack of knowledge of cultures outside the Western hemisphere (as exhibited by those encountered by participants in this study) represents a means of further entrenchment of delegitimizing the Other. Jo's experiences with people who did not, or could not distinguish between China and Thailand necessarily pose a threat to the diversity of Memorial University. While misinformation can be clarified, and curiosity can be satiated with knowledge, genuine disinterest about Other countries and cultures can only hinder attempts to globalize this campus, and to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. As McLaren and Giroux (1997) argue:

As a dominating practice, language usage implicates itself not merely by naming the world so as to support relations of oppression and exploitation, but also through its unwillingness to interrogate the constructed nature of its own categories and the selective visions it embodies in its own social geography. (p. 27)

This "unwillingness to interrogate" (p. 27) requires further exploration in the context of SEOLs in higher education. In this section, the views of participants and the people they meet while attending Memorial University were presented to illustrate the ways lack of information and misinformation can contribute to a breakdown in intercultural understanding. The narratives illustrating this breakdown suggest the need for opportunities to increase dialogue between the local people and SEOLs at the university. As an extension of this theme of perceptions of the Newfoundland

environment, participants engaged in drawing comparisons between their home culture, and the “host” culture, a process reported in other related studies, as discussed below.

#### 5.4 Comparisons of home and host cultures

This section outlines the tendency of SEOLs in this study to draw comparisons between their home culture and new “host” culture. Generally, participants contrasted the cultures, a process through which essential differences were highlighted. It is interesting that only one participant made a connection between the two cultures, and this instance is discussed in reference to the other participants, as well as relevant literature on cultural comparing and cultural awareness.

Throughout the study, I learned how the participants viewed the host culture and at times how they felt about life in their new environment. In an ethnographic study by Robinson (1985), the issue of learning through cultural contrast is explored. The author comments on the participant’s perspectives of the new culture. The participant Mira is an Indian student at Stanford University in the United States:

A vivid picture of American culture was painted as Mira described how she felt at Stanford and discussed the things to which she had to adjust. Some of these were good, others bad, from her perspective. While American culture was clearly in the foreground, a picture of Indian culture also emerged, by contrast. After all, she was filtering and contrasting her experience of Stanford with her own system of meaning. (p. 106)

The interviews with and journals from participants in this study revealed a variety of impressions of the new culture, the city, other students at the university, and Newfoundlanders in general. The participants, for the most part, felt free to make comparisons between their home culture and the new host culture. While such comparisons may be problematic as they are often grounded solely in personal



observations and generalizations, Kramsch (1998) argues that this negotiation is about “the way each culture views the other in the mirror of itself” (p. 26). Robinson (1985), too, asserts this is an understandable practice, and in the context of research, results in broader perspective:

Through the principle of contrast, the ethnographic interviews with Mira often led to such *etic* comparisons of some general domains in the cultures of India and the United States. However, the domains were defined *emically*, i.e. according to the attributes which gave meaning to Mira’s life. (p. 106)

The *etic* and *emic* views discussed by the author generally refer to “outsider” and “insider” perspectives respectively. Namely, the participant in that study revealed personal experiences, which represented an *emic*, or first-hand perspective, as well as an *etic* view that was conveyed through overarching opinions and perceptions of issues not necessarily within the participant’s personal experiences and knowledge. The six participants in this study, too, demonstrated their use of “filtering and contrasting” as a means of interpreting and understanding their experiences in relation to that which is familiar. In some cases, participants who decidedly stated they experienced no culture shock or adjustment difficulties emphasized the many differences they saw between the home and host cultures. For example, Inder highlights differences between the pace of St. John’s and other Canadian cities, the United States, and “some big cities in India”, and indicates the hospitality and easy-going nature of St. John’s:

...if you go to US, and if you go to the rest of the parts of Canada that are much more populated, of course like some big cities in India- traffic, pollution, everything, more people, nobody cares for you, right? They don't bother who you are, what you are doing, right? But when you go, it works for every place in the world, when you go to small place, people are much more friendly, everybody knows each other, like...kind of ideal social system, like it bothers you what somebody are doing, but you are concerned if, you know...they are much more friendly. So that works for St. John's too.

Inder also contrasts the social conditions for people in the host culture with those for in India:

Here everybody's equal, right, even a cleaner has got a car, even a prof has got a car, in India it's not like that. If you are poor you cannot have a car, cause you don't earn so much, right. So different sections of people are lower class, very low class, middle class, upper middle class, higher class, upper higher class, so this is one section of people. then there are different sections of people who are in government, like ministers, bureaucrats, member of parliaments, and union ministers.

Exploring such relations of power or status in this intercultural exchange is addressed in Byram and Morgan (1994) who comment on the ways the intercultural learner interprets their new surroundings: "Confrontation with their own culture seen from the perspective of others is an important means of brining unconscious and 'naturalised' beliefs into consciousness so that their relativity and specificity can be acknowledged" (p. 44).

Inder also contrasted the financial resources and economy of India and that of the host province:

I don't know, if you make India as the population of Canada, it'd be a much better country than Canada, seriously. You know systems are not that much difficult to maintain...like you know, Newfoundland everything is very much, of course most of North America, the whole of North America you know when you go to different places, of course some places there is a mess, right, you can't say everything is good, everything is systematized, but like in St. John's everything is...things happen at it's own time, you know. They have good rules to follow. Like in ice cleaning, the snow clearing, so everything is done at a cool interval of time, means, like you know? But in India it won't happen had there been so much snow because there was not so much resources... government hasn't that much money.

Finally, Inder points to an overall difference between the psychologies of the two cultures:

There are how many, 30 million people in Canada? 300 in the United States and 1,000 in India, see? So, 30 times more people. If you and me are here, in India they are supposed to be 28 more people, this is hard to explain to, you know we can fix it like this...so, am I supposed to care about you? No. 28 people...see this

is how it goes, but if like two, you and me, so I'll think yeah there is a girl, I should talk to her, or if she is feeling bad I should care about her. Like hard to care about 29 people, right? So, this is the psychology that develops, you see people, people are everywhere.

Inder's rational for his easy adjustment to a culture he considers very different from that which he experienced in India is that the media exposure he's had throughout his life has served a preparatory function in exposing him to life in other cultures. He said, "the culture wasn't new to me" because "these days it's everybody knows what's happening in the U.S. what's happening in Europe, right?" He explains that because he was anticipating these differences, he was prepared, and therefore had no problems adjusting. This hypothesis is supported in Guilherme (2002) who argues: "...the range of contacts and experiences which are now accessible has widened and their intensity has also increased due to a greater mobility and advances in communication technologies which have considerably facilitated cultural exchange" (p. 157).

Jo also engages in contrasting her culture with the host culture. Just as Inder briefly indicated in his statements, Jo too finds the pace of St. John's much slower than in her home city in Thailand, commenting: "Here my life is...better. I don't have to rush, like [at home] there is a lot of traffic jam, or...here I can walk from my house to here, walk back home, walk to the mall." Jo, like Inder, considers staying in the province after graduation, pending employment opportunities:

Jenn: So, what are your plans after you graduate, you mentioned architecture, do you have any plans that you're considering...?

Jo: Yeah...I think I will go for a job, maybe in here.

Jenn: In Newfoundland? Really? You like it that much?

Jo: Yeah. I like it here. It's a big difference between here and my hometown. Yeah, there is, I feel more relaxing.

The climate, a typical source of displeasure not only for visitors and new residents of the island, but for locals as well, was another issue that Jo compared with her home country, though she says she has adjusted:

Jo: When I first came here, in last September it was, 17 degree and I shaking. I was shaking because of the cold... Now at 10 or I think 6 or 7 degree. I can wear a long sleeve, just a long- sleeve and walk outside.

Jenn: and no coat?

Jo: It's cold, but not that bad.

Despite Jo's adjustment to the climate, and her appreciation of the slower pace in St. John's, this lifestyle also has its disadvantages, as Jo notes in this comparison, written in her journal:

I got a bad flu during last week and that made me feel terrible. This was because I couldn't enjoy Christmas and going to hospital here would be the last thing I ever think of doing. I have to sitting there waiting for 3-4 hours to see the Dr. unlike in my hometown in which I can just go there whenever I want and wait for only 10-20 minutes.

Later, in the third interview, Jo again asserted the difference in the quality i.e. efficiency of health care between Newfoundland and her home town, stating:

The big thing concerning myself is the way of health system here. You might feel it sounds funny but...every time that I get sick, I will think of going back home. Why? Because back home, I can go to hospital whenever I want but here I can't. I have to go make an appointment, which sometime take one or two week, or I have to go to the hospital and wait for an hour. I would rather say that I feel comfortable living here but not exactly like I am at home.

Khaled also pointed to the need for improved medical services for students at the campus clinic. Other issues raised through the process of comparing home and host cultures include dissatisfaction with local transportation, noted by Liz, and again by Hunter in the following excerpt:

Public transport is not cheap in Europe, but for instance at my old university, students are allowed to use all public transport for free. You don't even have to buy tickets, because it's necessary, you know.

Hunter adds of St. John's: "I've never seen a place with so few bikes in my life. There are simply no bikes. Every student in Germany has a bike.... Nobody seems to do that in Canada." He also contrasts academic practices between Memorial University and his university in Germany:

The university's acc...probably the department [I study in] is not the best department on this campus in terms of classrooms and stuff. But, after all it's quite a piece of work compared to the courses in Germany because Memorial is three hours a week and it's lots and lots of assignments. Um, Germany it's more like, you wouldn't read six or seven novels in a course during the semester, because in my opinion it doesn't make sense you know...so the main difference between my old university and Memorial is this...as far as [this] department is concerned is it's a bit like...what Europeans would call American culture, you know this consumer culture, and conveyor belt and one novel and next week [another]...you always stay on the surface.... There are seminars where the task is not to understand the book or interpret the book...for me, um, my day is 24 hours and I do a lot of work and so it's just you know, finish the book, finish the bloody book by Friday. Don't think, don't feel, just read it. Or read as much as you can.

Hunter also notes the cultural and racial homogeneity of Memorial University compared to his university in Germany:

Jenn: Okay, so, have you met many Newfoundlanders?

Hunter: Have I met many people? Oh yeah, because the vast majority of this university seems to be from Newfoundland...they stick to themselves....No, well, the university where I come from there are people from all parts of Germany. I met people from Ontario, I met people from British Columbia- a mad man was from British Columbia...(laughs) I don't want to go there. Um...but I would say about 90 or 95 percent of all people that I know and made friends with are from Newfoundland, probably 50 percent of them are from St. John's.

In the following comment, Hunter compares the people at Memorial with Germans the same age. He adds that his limited experience prevents his generalization from making any claims of validity:

Um...yeah I think in general, of course it's hard to try to make a judgement because I've been here for about 2 months so I'm not really in a position to judge people in general. But I think people are more or less, less complicated than German people the same age. They are friendlier, and more open-minded...um it's easier to make friends with them...on a surface level, you know? I've been not long here to...talk about like, deep friendships and relationships and stuff, but yeah on the first side, they are a bit like cooler than German people the same age.

The previous excerpts from Inder, Jo, and Hunter demonstrate some of the ways these SEOLs compared and contrasted the home and host cultures. Because the generalizations focus on the differences, rather than the similarities or commonalities of the two cultures, it can be argued that, as Hunter admits, the perceptions presented require additional experiences and further exploration in order to build critical awareness of both one's own culture and the new culture. As Liz commented in one of her journals: "By learning English, I am getting a deeper understanding of both the Western culture and Chinese culture.... I think this is one of the indications of the influence of language on culture."

The views communicated to me by the participants are presented here with some contextualization of where they originated in our discussions or interviews. By including various statements that indicate the inclination of some of the participants to draw stark contrasts between the home and host cultures, I am not implying that the comments are false or without basis as I too recognize differences between the cultures. However, as iterated at the beginning of this chapter, the practice of Othering and discourses of difference can serve to alienate and divide. The participants' tendencies to contrast cultures, while a potentially valuable practice in terms of adjustment, was not balanced by an inclination toward critical analysis of their observations, nor any attempts to find common links to bridge cultural gaps. This became clear to me when I realized that Sylvie, the sole Canadian SEOL in the study, introduced a shared characteristic between

her culture and the new culture. I asked her about the political atmosphere in Quebec as a young girl, and she replied:

Oh yeah, I think it's very...it would be very hard to grow up in Quebec and not have that teenager nationalistic phase, I think we all sort of like go through it, and then it fades away very fast, and today it's not...I think the new generation, they all, you'll see high school kids at some point wearing the Quebec flags, and the it's, today it's sort of becoming...see I'm looking for the English word now...it's just not the thing anymore...people are more about opening, I think there's something, and I'll compare with NF, because I think there's something very similar between Quebec people and NF people in Canada, and I think it comes from the isolation that they both ah, went through. Quebec was more of a cultural isolation, and NF is more geographical, but it's still, I think it's at the base of some form of insecurity in the general population, because I feel that in NF too, it's not an individual thing, like I talk about generality.

And there is something very similar in Quebec, which has triggered these nationalistic things, the need for, for ah...recognition and identification, I think, but it's sort of fading away right now and people are sort of finally realising that it's not, you don't need boundaries to have a culture or to preserve a language and that's what they were always scared about, and I think it came from this...inborn insecurity, cause yeah they were set aside for their issues, and...you know like the Newfoundland people, but very differently? But I still feel something similar.

This excerpt is discussed further through the theme of discourses of difference and Othering, but is included here to illustrate the one instance where a participant noted similarities between the home and host cultures. In considering the ways SEOLs in this study have engaged in contrasting home and host cultures, it is equally important to consider the ways members of the host culture contrast newcomers and “foreigners”, and on what bases this juxtaposition is formed. In a Canadian context, multiculturalism was initiated as a means of uniting the country (Legare, 1995) under the Trudeau government. However, according to Laroque (1989), multiculturalism is merely given lip service in Canada, particularly for native Canadian peoples, and he argues:

There seems to be a need to deny that racism exists. ...An area of growing concern to me is the very common practice of blaming Native peoples for their socio-economic conditions. Blaming “forgets” that racism has also been

institutionalized in government policies of assimilation, paternalism, and the historical and continuing confiscation of Native lands and resources. These policies have had a devastating impact on Native peoples but the fallout has been explained away as stemming from “cultural differences”. In turn “cultural differences” are reduced to stereotypes such as “Indians can’t or won’t adjust” to city life. In other words, Indian “culture”, rather than colonization or racism, is blamed for whatever has happened to Native peoples. (p. 74)

So, while Canada claims to promote multiculturalism and diversity, the tendency toward assimilation remains, and this assertion may be applied not only to Native peoples, but extended to include those for whom multiculturalism is intended to work for. Tying together this issue of race with the standard language ideology, Lippi-Green (1997) contends:

It is crucial to remember that it is not all foreign accents, but only accent linked to skin that isn’t white, or which signals third-world homeland, that evokes such negative reactions. There are no documented cases of native speakers of Swedish or Dutch or Gaelic being turned away from jobs because of communicative difficulties, although these adult speakers face the same challenges as native speakers of Spanish, Rumanian, and Urdu. (p. 239)

This supports and sheds light on Sylvie’s observation that because she is Canadian, people expect her to be a competent speaker of English. It can be argued that it is a combination of her Whiteness and her Canadian-ness that people hold this expectation. As Lippi-Green (1997) asserts, “Foreign accent is a sharp dissecting tool, and it is one that we are willing to use liberally and without concern for the harm it does. The degree of accentedness is not necessarily relevant” (p. 237). In other words, the experiences of the six participants in this study show that competence in spoken English is not necessarily a predictor of acceptance and adjustment, but rather accent and race are key factors in the ways their English communications are received, welcomed, or stigmatized in the new culture. Like the participants in this study, native or “legitimate” members of the new culture also appear to engage in contrasting of cultures. However, unlike the



participants in this study, come to such conclusions perhaps without the experiences or information about the Other, but rather based primarily on observable features of select individuals from the Other cultures i.e. accent and race.

In this section, a discussion of the ways in which participants engaged in comparing their home and host cultures was presented. All but one participant identified the differences between the two cultures. While comparing and contrasting the new culture to one's home culture is expected amongst SEOLs, particularly those away from home for the first time, such dichotomization should be mediated by informed critique and support. This discussion suggests the need for support of all members of the university in their development of critical cultural awareness. The role of support in cross-cultural adjustment is addressed in the following section. The theme emerged from the participants' experiences with support services and other sources of support in the community and within the university itself.

### 5.5 The role of support in cross-cultural adjustment

Two reports related to international students at Memorial University are discussed in chapter two and are written from the perspective of institutional recruitment and support services (see Burnaby, 2002; Parsons, 2000). Recommendations from both studies indicate the need for further implementation and integration of support services for international students on this campus. In the study presented here, participants provided their personal experiences with such support services, as well as support from outside the university through their articulation of support for and challenges to their adjustment. This section details the experiences of support as expressed by the

participants in the study, followed by accounts of some challenges they faced in the next section.

According to Parsons (2000), “The University has a responsibility to provide international students with a warm welcome and [to ensure] that students’ experiences are positive” (p. 104). She recommends several ways of achieving this goal, including concerted efforts by university faculty and staff, as well as other students, to let the international students know “that there are people at the university who care about them and who are there to help them” (p. 104). In this section, I first introduce perspectives associated with the theme of support. I do not use the term support services, as some of the participants referred to support they received from beyond the structures of the university. Within this theme of support, both supportive and non-supportive experiences are described. Participants generally provided positive accounts of experiences with the faculty of the university. For example, Jo, who has difficulty understanding her supervisor in a class he teaches, describes the professor as patient with her questions:

Jo: Yeah, like my, my supervisor also, he’s speak really fast and...soft...so it’s like, “ah, what’d he say?” Yeah, like I’m taking one, one course with him this semester, everytime I’m like, oh, when will the class end, I don’t understand anything he says...yeah...

Jenn: Do you ever go to him after and say okay, I totally missed that part, or can you tell me what you said about this...?

Jo: Yes, yes...I have to go to his office so many times and, not ask what he said in class, but I will read his notes and then go and ask him...what, which part I don’t understand.

Jenn: and how does he respond to you?

Jo: He’s really kind. He explain everything.

Khaled shared this experience, and implies that there is a connection between his supervisor being a SEOL, and his ability to be supportive of Khaled and other SEOLs:

Jenn: A speaker of English as...not your first language...like, do you think that it has affected your experience...or do you think it's created a different kind of experience for you?

Khaled: Well, not really like, I tend to like when I don't understand I tend to ask again. So I don't really feel shy if I don't understand. I just say pardon me, or I'm not a speaker, like I just say that, like I was taking a course once and I told the prof if he can't give me the notes in advance because I don't understand what he's saying. But he was fine, he just give it to me, so...

Jenn: So, you found that the professors were supportive in that way...

Khaled: Oh yeah, they were...actually my supervisor...he is himself Chinese. So...

Jo also had a positive experience with faculty of the university upon her arrival to St. John's. She wrote about this in her journal:

It is quite excited for me to come here because it is my first time to be far away from home. I arrived at the St. John's airport [in] 2002 at around 2 o'clock in the morning. The faculty from ESL department came to take me from the airport to my home stay on Frecker Drive. I remembered that on the way home, he drove me thru the university and some other place so that I would have a chance to take a look around the town. That made me feels the difference between here and Bangkok, where I came from. Here is very quiet at 2:00 am while the life in Bangkok is still going on at that time.

According to a new comprehensive website for international students at Memorial University, all international students are provided this service of being greeted at the airport by simply filling out an Airport Pickup Application online. This service was recommended in Parsons (2000) who maintained, "This is very important in shaping students' initial experiences" (p. 106).

Hunter, while reluctant to admit he needs help, also found his professors to be helpful and welcoming:

Jenn: So, do you take advantage of your profs' office hours...do you go and see your profs after class and things like that?

Hunter: Yeah, but that's because sometimes...I just want to make sure that I got the point or if I have an argument that I couldn't develop in class...if it was taking ages to get to the point of what I want to say, you know, it's like I go to the office hours and say well I've got a question, and um...all of my profs say something like oh you're welcome, please come again.

During our second interview session, Hunter also commented on two of his professors at Memorial, "They're both the best two teachers I've had in my life". He seemed to appreciate their hard work, and later added:

Um, yeah, but compared to my instructors in Germany, I think those people put a lot more effort into their work, you know, they have to correct much more essays because in Germany there's only a final exam at the end of the term, [the professors at Memorial] have term assignments, they have final tests, they have to read all this stuff.

Some of the participants also mentioned individual faculty members showing support above and beyond academic responsibilities. For example, Hunter was invited to Christmas dinner by two of his professors, one of whom offered to cook whatever he wanted. He explained:

...so I went to her office and she said what are you doing for Christmas? And I said oh probably I'll sit around and wait 'til it's over, and she said "Why don't you come to my place, I'll make you a meal. What does your mother cook for Christmas?" and I said, "Well, my mother is not big into cooking", and she said, "Well...what do you want to eat?" Most of the time I like spaghetti because [my mom's] spaghetti is the best. Yeah, and so I told her yeah well spaghetti with tomato sauce would be quite nice and the second I spoke it out, it was like, why didn't I say turkey, potato, steak, you know?

Participants also referred to specific support services at the university as positive experiences in their adjustment and overall well-being at Memorial University. Khaled stated briefly in his journal:

At MUN, there is an obligatory course for all international graduate students. This course places emphasis on written English. The course is very useful and helpful.

MUN various student services were very useful for me during the period of my study namely, the writing centre, career development, counselling centre, the GSU [Graduate Student's Union] and ESL [English as a Second Language].

When I asked specifically if he had taken advantage of the services of the campus

Writing Centre, Khaled replied:

Oh yeah, excellent. I'm glad you reminded me...oh excellent service. I went there for doing my thesis, and it's wonderful really. It's wonderful, it's excellent, I loved it. It's very helpful, very useful, everything. Anyway, the way I worked, like I...don't take the whole thing. Well, it was like things that I'm really not sure about and the girl would help me and she was really excellent. An excellent service, yes. I actually acknowledged them in my thesis, yeah because it was really helpful.

Other participants drew support from outside the university, for example, Jo whose home stay family also invited her to Christmas dinner at their home. She wrote in her journal:

[Dianne] cooked many kind of fish for this party. Isn't it supposed to be turkey? Anyway, everything was so great. She still takes care of me as one of her family. Since I got a flu, she asked if I need any help. She will call again tomorrow and if I am not getting better she will take me to the hospital and that make me feel like I am home.

Liz, too, finds assistance outside the university through her peer group of other Chinese students. Her peers provide an important resource for support:

Ah...I think I find answers from this kind of questions basically from my Chinese friends. 'Cause it's easier, right, to talk about it, and if the information about my transportation is very, very important for you, you don't want to make mistake.

Liz also takes a proactive position in terms of finding information for herself, and says members of the community as well, are at times a source of support:

Liz: But sometime I make phone calls, like if I want to go somewhere I will call that store or, and ask them how can I get there? And they will tell me.

Jenn: People are generally helpful...

Liz: Yeah, yeah.

The other side of this issue is, of course the experience of lacking support, as in the following comments about the university's support services. For example, when I asked Khaled about services for international students, he responded he would like to see more comprehensive support:

Khaled: It's all right. I don't know, I mean I think [International student services] should be better.

Jenn: What do they provide for students?

Khaled: We can go for them and ask any question, but really though, I don't know how much they are helpful, like...I'll give you an example: I wanted to do the driving test? And I went to them and they just give me the phone number. See you know like I really don't...they give us like, they give us health insurance...But for me it's like a personal thing...I don't think they really do anything for me. I mean every time I go ask questions I already know the answer, I expect better. They are nice people, all of them know me, but...

Jenn: So you would like to have more details, or more support...?

Khaled: More help, more help. Like, you go there okay like give me the phone number it's like give me...whatever anything...website, you know like, I don't know...this is just an example that comes to my mind, right.

Khaled also complained of the university's inefficient medical services for students:

Khaled: ...the medical service is horrible for us, like, for everybody actually. Like in Alberta I didn't really have this, like I go there like just on the way and see a doctor? Here I have to wait two weeks. I mean, I remember even like I have to see an eye- I have a problem, so I wanted to see an eye doctor and they give me an appointment after two months...really and it's like what's the point? I didn't- like they were not able to get earlier. So I went to see them and had my eye checked anyway.

Jenn: So you wish there was better medical service...?

Khaled: Yeah, it's really not good, really not good. Alberta was much better. Why, I don't know.

Sylvie, who moved to the province with her young daughter, emphasizes the need for changes to the campus day care fees, particularly for students in her situation, where both parents are working students. She commented:

Sylvie: Oh yeah, we like it here, yeah the only thing we find hard to swallow is the daycare fees...

Jenn: Oh, yeah, I heard it's a really competitive market here, and that it's hard to find a place that has room...

Sylvie: It's very expensive because it's not subsidised. Like, you can ask, we were told oh no, there's a subsidy system because like in Quebec it's entirely covered by the government, and here it's like, we pay at the MUN daycare we pay \$540-something dollars a month, so that's like having two rents. And we were told, oh no, as students you will be eligible for daycare subsidy, but it's- it doesn't work like that. Yeah, they told us that if we make \$1000 a month, we don't...I find that scary, I find that scary for a province that has a problem of it's young going away. I don't know why they don't- I think it should be a priority, right. So, here I'm going on...(laughs) but I find it very strange that NF does not have anything to support- obviously they give a reason like they say they just don't have the money. They will help the people with, like I guess single parents, like people who really cannot pay, but as long as we can pay, even we're like this [gesturing with fingers showing how close they are to not being able to pay] they won't give you money.

I think the students at the MUN daycare pay \$40 less than professors, there's almost no difference. That's something that, it's the only thing that bothers me about Newfoundland...it's just that, we're starting to think if we go back to Quebec when I write my thesis, we save \$400 a month, right? That's a lot of money, and it sucks because we're happy here...

This is important in the context of SEOLs coming to Newfoundland from other provinces and countries, as indicated by Sylvie, such a discrepancy in cost of living for students with children can influence their decision to stay at the university, or to come to the university in the first place.

Hunter, too, questioned the ability of the university to respond effectively to the needs of students. The issue is relevant to SEOLs in particular, as well as other students,

because many SEOLs live on campus and require access to the facility Hunter speaks of here:

Jenn: Have you seen any academic or international student advisors, or...?

Hunter: Yeah, actually from time to time I have to drop by the International Student Advisor's office because um, because some guys at Memorial don't seem to be too motivated to do their jobs like, those people responsible for [an on-campus facility], which is, like, the common house of [name of a residence] and ah, so you have to go there in order to get your computer fixed, you have to go there in order to get the pool fixed, you have to go there in order to get your MUN card fixed because it doesn't work anymore, ah...many things don't work...

Jenn: Sorry, you have to go there to get the *pool* fixed? Is that what you said?

Hunter: The computers in the pool, yeah.

Jenn: Oh.

Hunter: I went there three or four or five times to see what's up with it and they said something like, oh yeah we'll have it fixed by next week, and ah, next week I went there again and said come on guys you know. And still, they haven't got it fixed. Ah, finally I went to the head of Housing, and the next day it was fixed...it's just well...yeah...many people don't seem to be interested. There are many students from other countries [who] use the study room or the computer pool. If something doesn't work, they just say all right, obviously it doesn't work, so I can't work, good for me...I don't know...it's not my style.

Jo's third interview revealed a challenge with those support services at the university specifically intended for international students. She shared in her journal:

My perception of MUN has been changed a lot since I arrived here. I still feel that MUN does not care much about international students. I think the International Student Advisor (ISA) should be more helpful and all departments in the university should be more co-operate.

The recommendation to strive toward more coordination between the university's various departments and support services was also included in Burnaby's (2002) report. In one instance at the university, Jo indicates that she felt she was treated unfairly. She reflected on this experience in her journal:



What I am thinking is why does it has to be some different between the way they treat me/us or whoever and the way they treat you guys. For example, this was happen to me long time ago. Last summer my friend and me wanted to apply for a summer ground job so we went to consult with one of the ISA officer to make sure that we could work and how to apply for SIN card. The only answer that we got from her that time was “You could if they hire you.” The point is her voice doesn’t seem to be helpful but...insult. In my opinion, I think that she is supported to give us some advice so that we can get the job, not discourage us.

As a caveat, this experience is not shown here as an illustration of the incompetence of the International Student Advisor, or any other support services at the university. Rather, it is intended to demonstrate one instance of one student’s experience with this particular service. It is important to expose readers to the ways SEOLs have interpreted their experiences at the university, as this is the purpose of the study. Through Jo’s story of what she feels was unequal treatment of International and Canadian students, we see her frustration and discouragement, a personal perspective which represents a fundamental piece in the puzzle of experiences of SEOLs with services at Memorial University.

Other challenges in terms of support for SEOLs focussed on experiences within the community. As three of the participants commented, transportation in the city poses a significant challenge to their mobility, and to the amount of convenience they enjoy while living here. For example, Liz stated, “The bus system is just no good”. Two other participants suggested ways to improve the transportation services to facilitate easier travel to and from campus and throughout the city itself. Hunter’s experience with the city’s bus system highlights both the issue of cost and lack of information prior to taking the bus. In addition, he refers to public transportation in his university in Germany to suggest a means of improving the system for students:

I once tried to make use of the [local bus system] which is called the "loser cruiser" I think...yeah...that's a pretty good name because I wanted to get the bus, and I said one ticket please one way, a single ride, and they said okay, drop the coins...into the machine and I said coins?...I've got a five dollar bill. Oh I'm sorry I can't take you, you need to have coins of about \$1.75 or whatever it was. That was frustrating. It was my last ride with the loser cruiser.

Public transport is not cheap in Europe, but for instance at my old university, students are allowed to use all public transport for free. You don't even have to buy tickets, because it's necessary, you know. But...I've never seen a place with so few bikes in my life. There are simply no bikes. Every student in Germany has a bike.... Nobody seems to do that in Canada.

Sylvie commented on the inefficiency of the bus system in St. John's, and as a parent, noted an issue that is significant for all pedestrians in the city, i.e. inadequate snow clearing on city sidewalks, a major concern in St. John's. She suggests a means of improving convenience and safety for students living off campus:

Jenn: Do you live far from campus?

Sylvie: No, not so far, but to take a bus to the university, it's faster to walk. But I think some car pool system like this would be very easy to do...and for people with kids too. Because I have a kid, I know a lot of students with kids and it's very difficult for them in Winter because there's no sidewalks in this city. So maybe that's one thing. I'm trying to think of something else.

While many of the issues raised in this section could be true for all students, not only SEOLs, this study seeks to locate the experiences of SEOLs in their current situation, and did not limit interview questions and responses to linguistic- and culture- specific experiences only. It should be emphasized that all of the participants commented on both positive aspects of support and the lack of support that they felt should be provided. None of the participants portrayed their overall experience of Memorial University as completely inadequate, and the degrees of support identified here serve to frame a small area of the ways in which these six participants are experiencing cross-cultural adjustment. The next section focuses on challenges to cross-cultural adjustment

specifically, and focuses more on intercultural communication and experiences that the participants attributed to culture.

## 5.6 Challenges to cross-cultural adjustment

In this section, the theme of challenges to cross-cultural adjustment is explored. While some of the participants expressed their adjustment experiences as unencumbered or without incident, others- more specifically the three female participants- all noted particular experiences of challenges to their adjustment as SEOLs. None of the participants spoke explicitly of culture shock or great difficulty adjusting, however, the following excerpts illustrate the complex nature of life in a new culture, and with a new language.

Liz, in her first interview, mentioned generally the benefit of studying abroad, but is again careful not to overgeneralize her experience:

It's good...to be a student at MUN, but you know, hard to compare with...cause I have no experience in other universities in North America, you know, so it's hard to say this way is better or worse, but it's just good to travel to a foreign country and to a totally different place and have a couple years experience here, so...that's good, I can say nothing...

She elaborated on some of the physical constraints of living in a different climate:

Oh yeah, it is, but I hate winter here...the snow it's too much....very cold and windy, and it's hard to walk. And it's very hard to get a driver's license here, you must wait a whole one year to get it, so winter is not a good time for me...and the bus system is just no good. (laughing) I remember last winter you said you waited almost one hour for the bus, but it just simply changed the route, right? It's just stupid.

When I probed for more specific experiences, Liz remembered feeling inadequate as an English speaker. While this example refers to language-specific experiences, I ultimately included it as a manifestation of cultural adjustment in the sense that culture is “the form

of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them” (Goodenough, 1964, quoted in Robinson, 1985, p. 10). I included this example in this chapter because of Liz’ contextualization of the process of communicating in a new culture, and her consideration of how she is perceived by members of the new culture:

Um...from the very beginning it’s hard for me to understand all the things people are talking about. I just cannot follow. You know it was quite embarrassing cause I’ve been studying English for many, many years, but still I cannot listen and speak very well...now I’m not good at it either, but at the beginning I was worse...but I felt a little bit embarrassed um...then...Like, for example you invite me to participate in your study...I start to think oh...I know I am expected to speak a lot, right? Then I feel- think, can I speak correctly? (laughing) A little bit nervous, you know, cause it’ll be text. It starts to- you will not worry about your first language...as you speak, second language...you, you will feel you will be judged by others...and sometimes if you’re totally lost, you will feel stupid...especially in a group and somebody asks you a question, you just can’t understand- “pardon me?” (laughing) So that kind of thing.

Focusing on what these experiences mean in terms of Liz’ academic participation, we had this exchange:

Jenn: So, do you feel that kind of thing affected your participation in class...

Liz: Oh yeah, very much. Yeah, cause I rarely participate, I mean...speak out in the class and I think most of the Chinese students is the same way. They just be the quiet student in the class, right? I think you know like [names of two other students in a class we took together]. They did not tend to speak a lot in the classroom.

In this excerpt, Liz uses a common stereotype of Chinese students to support her own behaviour in class. However, she also disrupts this stereotype when she offers an alternative explanation of why this stereotype is perpetuated and continues to exist, citing language, rather than culture, as the primary reason for this image of Chinese students:

Liz: Yeah, yeah. But before that I think she...you know it’s probably personality...too. Cause ah, even in China, even in first language environment, I

am not a very talkative person. So, yeah, it's kind of personality...but still language is a big reason in it.

Jenn: So, this is a stereotype of Chinese students- listen to the teacher, don't speak very much. Do you think these are cultural attributes?

Liz: No, no, no. I think in...when I was little, maybe the classroom is, was very much this way- teacher speaks and students listen, but as you go to a higher level, like in higher education, like in university, I think participation is everywhere. So, I think language is a...major reason for Chinese students not to speak much in classrooms here, than culture or personality.

Part of Jo's experience of St. John's included a home stay with a local family when she arrived from Thailand- an experience that presented her with challenging situations. She recalls feeling anxiety when confronted with what she considered a delicate and complicated situation with the mother figure of the home. She describes both cultural and linguistic factors at play in her home stay experience in a journal entry:

After being with home stay for 5 months. I had decided to move to my own apartment because I had a little problem about food. I found that Canadian, especially my host family, had a smaller meal than Thai. For example, they eat sandwich together with some fruit and a box of juice for lunch while I usually have a big meal when I am back home. That problem made me feel inconvenient to ask them to cook whatever I want or ask them to cook myself. I thought that would make them feel guilty that they did not take care me well.

I also found that living with other family was not as same as living with my own family. Sometime I could not do something that I would like to do. This was just because I was not in my own house. The other problem that I found very difficult for me was when I had to tell [Dianne] that I would like to move out. I found it was very difficult to express my feeling while I was speaking in English. It was like I had to concern more about what to say, what kind of verb do I have to use, what should be the intonation, and so on. Finally, I looked nervures [*sic*] instead of looking sad. Anyhow, living with them gave me a lot of valuable experiences.

During the study, after having moved out of the home, Jo noted in her journal that she had been invited to her home stay family's house for dinner, and was expecting her home stay "mother" to call in advance: "I have been waiting for her call to confirm about the party but I haven't heard any yet. I find this is an awkward situation. I don't know if it is

polite to call her myself.” Her indication that she was uncertain of the appropriate cultural convention in this particular situation (as opposed to stating it as though this problem could happen to individuals from the host culture, for example) represents unfamiliarity with the cultural practices. This is understandable considering Jo’s social group at Memorial consists primarily of other Thai students. Also, this is a very specific situation—one that might not arise through interaction with peers from the new culture, therefore it is unlikely that Jo would have had the opportunity to learn the “appropriate” behaviour herself, or from her peers at the university.

In addition to her adjustment in the home of local people, Jo also experienced challenges at the university, and describes in the following journal entry a troubling situation at the university:

My friend went to Housing this morning because [someone] moved into the room that was supposed to be hers. The answer that she got was that girl would like to stay with another girl in that apartment so my friend got kick out. (Actually both of them just moved in together). Another funny story is that one of the girl in that apartment [building] is our friend, and [the first friend] also want to stay with her. Do you know what Housing say? They are going to ask if [the second friend] want to move out and find another apartment so that they can stay together!!! Isn’t that insane!!! Why don’t they move those 2 girls who have just moving!!! Is that because we are international student and we don’t know how to complain while those 2 girls are Canadian! I think this is really unfair.

Jo’s astonishment with the decisions made by the university staff supports her shift from the beginning of the study when she appeared to be expressing mostly only positive images of her life in St. John’s, to later in the study when she began to critically evaluate some of her experiences. Her recognition of herself within the category of Other i.e. international student shows her frustration with the system because her and her friend “don’t know how to complain”, and therefore she feels they have been treated unfairly. In another example from Jo’s journal presented in chapter one, it seems that her critique of

the situation at the university might have influenced her to change her behaviour in subsequent challenging situations when she felt she was treated unfairly. The story involved a situation at a department store where Jo felt she had been given poor service because she was Thai, and she had returned to complain. Her complaint was handled by a different clerk, who dealt with Jo's problem effectively.

Jo's experience of complaining resulted in a positive experience, one that seemed to empower her. Her previous experience at the university left her feeling disempowered and cheated, leading her to modify her behaviour in a similar situation where she felt she was being treated unfairly. This experience demonstrates Jo's progression from a powerless and confused position in the new culture, to a position of comfort and competency. In regard to this development of critical awareness, Jo's experience suggests the value of reflection and critical thinking, and the potential value of support for such contemplation. Support for critical cultural awareness on a personal level should be a part of higher education, through the encouragement of dialogue and understanding amongst SEOLs and the university community as a whole. Access to accurate information is clearly crucial to students' abilities to make informed critiques that are supported by knowledge and awareness, and can facilitate better relations between support structures and students.

One issue raised by Sylvie was in reference to delivering oral presentations in English. She commented that this particular activity is a challenge for her on several levels, including the expectations she perceives from others:

...when it comes to presenting things in front of people, doing seminars and things like that and asking and answering questions, that becomes very difficult. When you have a stressful thing that becomes very difficult. For me, it's still difficult, I'm doing good, but it's still difficult to do seminars in English because

when there's a stress element it doesn't come out as...things don't flow right. If I speak in front of a crowd in French, I don't have to learn everything off by heart because I know my subject let's say and I'm able to talk about it. But in a language that's not your first language, that becomes harder and I have to make key words, find key words that I'm gonna learn off by heart so that I'm able to keep a flow when I speak in front of people in English otherwise I always end up getting stuck and saying...you know I wanna say something and it didn't come out the way I want and that's something that's that's I think very common to people that don't speak English as a first language.

And that's something that ah English, native English people and like professors and things like that will not necessarily understand. Especially when it comes from a Canadian, I'm not an international student so when I'm in front of a class and I'm being asked a question and I'm thinking of the best way to answer because it just doesn't come out as naturally in English with the stress. As a Canadian, I don't feel like people will necessarily understand. If it's a Russian student, for example, because the difference and the contrast is so obvious, there is more understanding. But I'm a French Canadian, I'm not an international student, I'm a Canadian and I am somehow expected to perform in English. This is something I feel...

Sylvie recognizes her unique position as a Canadian SEOL in the expectations of others.

As discussed in section 5.4 of this chapter, because she is from Canada where, in addition to her native language of French, English is one of the official languages, people expect her to speak English. Her suggestion that there is a lack of understanding of her situation indicates the need for awareness and understanding of Canadian SEOLs in the sense that they may be viewed as less Other than international students, and thus overlooked by support services, particularly in the area of academic and linguistic needs. While Othering itself must be problematized, I use it here to indicate a potential reason for the lack of recognition of students with similar experiences to Sylvie's. Later in the chapter, discourses of difference and Othering are confronted as an important theme that surfaced from the study.

This section presented the problematic nature of cross-cultural adjustment and some of the challenges faced by the participants in the new culture. From difficulties



adjusting to the climate, to challenges with intercultural communication, the participants' experiences highlighted in this section evidence the need for encouragement of members of the university to reflect on their own experiences with ethnocentric and racist practices. If the university is to truly support diversity on campus, native English speakers need to explore their own socialization into the English language and culture, and reflect on poisonous practices that are often overlooked because they are viewed as harmless or are affiliated with childhood and innocence, as illustrated in one narrative. As evidenced by participants in this study, Othering is a deeply entrenched practice- one that threatens the vision of diversity for Memorial University. The next section examines the practice of stereotyping and generalizing as explicated in this study, and provides specific instances of Othering towards and by the participants.

### 5.7 Stereotypes of language and culture

Stereotyping refers to the tendency to assign categories to individuals and groups based on assumptions of an accepted type or attitude. This section explores the practice of stereotyping that emerged through this study. Stereotyping is tied to the concept of Othering, but while it is possible to include oneself in a stereotype, e.g. when Khaled stereotypes middle Eastern people as generally strong learners of English, Othering necessitates the stereotype be directed towards a group to which the individual doing the stereotyping does not belong. An individual may recognize her- or himself as Other, but generally Othering is directed externally. The tendency toward a "similarity-dissimilarity pattern" (Azkin, 1964, p. 30) is a cultural means of maintaining a perception of internal uniformity that highlights the differences of non-members as a means of maintaining the

cultural “identity”. According to Guilherme (2002), “Such a constructed internal homogeneity has accounted for stereotypes and prejudices formed on the basis of definitive self- and/or other’s cultural representations” (p. 126).

Participants in this study engaged in stereotyping on the basis of language and culture, highlighting the problematic nature of such practices. Some of the participants attempted to provide reasons for why they believed in such stereotypes and discourses of disadvantage. For example, Hunter indicated that his own motivation for avoiding other German students on this campus had to do with his desire to become more proficient in English. He cites the tendency of SEOLs to speak with others in their mother tongue while attending Memorial University as a major reason for their lack of proficiency in spoken English:

Um...on the other hand I know many people who are prone to hang out with their guys, like the Indians, Chinese, the Asians, you know they just stick together, I mean it’s hard for them, but on the other hand, that won’t solve their problems because all they do when they are standing in a room together, they start to speak Indian. It doesn’t make any sense...

This conversation continued, and included stereotypes of Germans:

Hunter: I don’t want to talk too much German because in order to make progress in English, you just talk as, as little German as you can.

Jenn: You’re very disciplined.

Hunter: I’m German.

Jenn: (Laughing.) That’s funny.

Hunter: Germans are efficient...and racist, yeah...and they always have the sauerkraut.

Jenn: Those are the stereotypes of Germans?

Hunter: I guess so.

At this point, Hunter discussed an episode of an American cartoon where typical stereotypes of Germans were provided for satirical humour.

It was interesting that while Hunter pointed to Indian students as “prone to hang out with” one another, Inder, the participant from India advises other SEOLs:

Only talk to people from here. If you talk to people from your own country, they are the polluters of your language. Rather talk as little as one can [to speakers of your mother tongue]. In regard to English aspect, what they will talk will be meaningless.

In an interview with Jo, she spoke of her experiences in the ESL programme at Memorial prior to her acceptance into a Masters programme, and like Hunter and Inder, noted a possible reason for the stereotyping of Chinese students. She acknowledged that one way the university, specifically the ESL programme, could help students in their learning of English is to encourage more communication outside of the classroom (something the ESL programme currently does, for example, through its Conversation Partner programme, which pairs native-English-speaking students with students in the ESL programme for regular meetings to practice English informally). She suggested that the reason why some Chinese students fail to master spoken English might be linked to their social access, by sheer population, to others speaking their mother tongue, or perhaps, lack of access to native-English-speaking social groups:

Jenn: Is there anything you'd like to see here at MUN that's not here right now, for students whose first language is not English?

Jo: I don't know....maybe to encourage students to speak more English, like in ESL class, most of them are from China, most of them are Chinese, so when the class end, they will speak Chinese, and I don't think they are learning any, that much English, really. Maybe they should, the programme should force students to speak English.

Inder also hypothesizes as to why Chinese students have such difficulties when they attend English-medium universities:

...like in China, Bachelor in [sciences] is start in Chinese, in India it start in English. So if you start doing [it] in English then you need to have good command over stuff, so it expresses what you learn as [a professional in your field], right?

He elaborates:

...Suppose you must have come across Chinese who talk to you, they are very slow. I got a friend in Computer Science, he is from Germany...when I used to go to his office his office is...there are a lot of Chinese people who are in his office. Of course he has got a very excellent English, I didn't find any Canadian of his match, you know. So I used to talk to him- you will notice I have a habit of talking really fast now...so I used to talk to him very fast and he used to say hey man, take it easy, be a little slow. And when Chinese used to talk to me, I used to flood them with words so much, they just keep shut and they never answered me. So, see had I been not that inspiration, that motivation before in my country, I wouldn't have been able to speak in such a nice way as I do here, right? Because we have learned all this stuff back home, so things are not new for us here, right.

Lippi-Green (1997) provides a frame of communicative competence in which to view

Inder's claims of Chinese SEOLs' ability to comprehend his English. She argues:

When speakers are confronted with an accent which is foreign to them, the first decision they make is whether or not they are going to accept their responsibility in the act of communication. What we will see again and again...is that members of the dominant language group feel perfectly empowered to reject their role, and to demand that a person with an accent carry the majority of the responsibility in the communicative act. Conversely, when such a speaker comes in contact with another mainstream speaker who is nonetheless incoherent or unclear, the first response is usually not to reject the fair share of the communicative burden, but to take other factors into consideration.

Because of Inder's confidence in his English, and his assertion that English is now in fact his mother tongue, it can be argued that he identifies mainly with the dominant language group i.e. native English speakers. In his own narrative of his experiences with a SEOL from Germany, Inder comments: "*Of course* he has got a very excellent English" (emphasis added). According to Lippi-Green's (1997) interpretation, Inder's

interpretation is influenced by race. Inder *expects* the White German SEOL to be a legitimate speaker of English, whereas his expectations of all Chinese nationals are informed by a racially motivated stereotype. While this process may be automatic, and Inder, like many of us, is most likely unaware of his culture stigmatization, Lippi-Green (1997) maintains that each participant in a new linguistic exchange engages this evaluation process whereby accents are quickly assessed based on factors “directly linked to homeland, the race and ethnicity, the social self of the person in front of us” (p. 72). However, when Inder states, “I didn’t find any Canadian of his match”, a more accurate interpretation might include the issue of class. Previously, Inder’s comments revealed his classist views of rural and Newfoundland English, and a combination of these dialects. Although race might affect Inder’s assessment of Chinese SEOLs, class plays a role in his valuing of the German SEOL’s English over the Canadians he has met at Memorial University, and more specifically, the Newfoundlanders he has encountered.

Crawford (2000) argues that many Americans remain to exhibit xenophobic tendencies, and often respond with impatience when SEOLs, or any individuals with different accents speak. This observation is supported in Jo’s experiences with speaking English in the new culture:

...sometimes they, I mean people around here, [tend] to think that I must have very poor English and they will...kind of try to not understand what I am I saying. This kind of situation makes me lost self-confident and sometime gives up talking with them. In my opinion, I don’t think there is any ideal or perfect English but I try to speak correctly as much as I can.

Jo has experienced first-hand the influence of accent differentiation, and her interpretation of the experience exemplifies Lippi-Green’s (1997) argument that native speakers will reject their role of listener in communicative interactions with SEOLs.

The one participant from China, Liz, was also the participant who seemed the most concerned about providing accurate and “objective” information, and the person most cautious about generalizing in her responses. In her interviews, Liz denies culturally attributed stereotypes, such as the pervasive “model minority” stereotype of Asian students (e.g., Toppo, 2002), and in a discussion about her own experiences as an English language learner, provides an alternative perspective:

Jenn: So, this is a stereotype of Chinese students- listen to the teacher, don't speak very much. Do you think these are cultural attributes?

Liz: No, no, no. I think in...when I was little, maybe the classroom is, was very much this way- teacher speaks and students listen, but as you go to a higher level, like in higher education, like in university, I think participation is everywhere. So, I think language is a...major reason for Chinese students not to speak much in classrooms here, than culture or personality.

In one discussion, Liz and I reached an understanding as students- one that responds to the stereotypes of quiet and passive Asian students. We were talking about oral presentations for our courses:

Liz: So I think if I know what I want to talk about, it's not that difficult. If you are not sure what you're expected to do, even your first language is English, you still feel nervous...so...

Jenn: Yeah, I think those sorts of things are coming up from others in this interview process. People are saying you know, as a non-native speaker of English, you know, this has happened to me, and I'm thinking really...? 'Cause that's happened to me, too...and English is my first language...

Liz: (laughing) I know.

Jenn: ...I think that there are parallels from just being a student, not necessarily because of the language you speak best...

Liz: Yeah, that's what I want to...distinguish...I want to ah, make it clear what is the real reason, so maybe I tend to be too, too, too talkative on these issues cause I think maybe there are many reasons under this questions and in this ah circumstances it's just reason one is major, maybe in that reason B is major, so...Like the presentation, for many time I saw Canadian students just as nervous

as I am, so I think that's not a language problem- not ONLY at least. Students are nervous (laughing)...

Becoming a “critical intercultural speaker” (Guilherme, 2002, p. 126) requires the speaker to be “conscious that national/ethnic cultural identities are made of both persistent and changeable components whose articulation adopts particular forms and meanings in specific circumstances” (p. 127). In the above dialogue between Liz and me, we were involved in a process of negotiation whereby stereotypes were explored in a very informal discussion of commonalities between cultures. As Guilherme (2002) offers, “The critical intercultural speaker needs to move beyond the universe of self-contained cultural homogeneities/diversities” (p. 127). This process of dismantling stereotypes within and between cultures is imperative in the development and support of diversity.

This section revealed participants' tendencies to stereotype both Other cultures/languages and members of their own culture/language. For example, Hunter maintains that “the Indians, Chinese, the Asians, you know they just stick together”, and he also draws on stereotypes of his own culture, commenting, “Germans are efficient...and racist...”. While the latter comment was noted with some sense of sarcasm, it appeared that Hunter does invest in the notion of “the efficient German”, while at the same time calling into play the idea that such stereotypes are inaccurate. For example, when I asked if those were stereotypes of Germans, Hunter answered, “I guess so,” and indicated they were stereotypes he had become aware of about his own culture through the new culture, more specifically, an American cartoon.

Other participants offered stereotypical descriptions of cultures/languages, which have been problematized in this section. The notion of Othering has been raised as a form of stereotyping; one that essentializes difference and tends to be directed externally, as

opposed to towards one's own culture. In the next section, the theme of discourses of difference and Othering is presented, locating the engagement in such practices through the participants' experiences as SEOLs.

## 5.8 Discourses of difference and Othering

This section focuses on discourses of difference and Othering made evident through the participants' narratives. It presents examples whereby participants engaged in Othering, as well as the instances where they themselves felt they were Othered based on their linguistic or cultural backgrounds, and the perceived differences between cultures. Participants are shown in this section to demonstrate a range of reactions to people of other cultures. An array of impressions with regard to Othering are apparent, including those participants who are obviously comfortable with making generalizations about their own and Other cultures, as well as those who are clearly wary of such practices, and views between these two positions.

Discourses of difference (e.g., Gale & Densmore, 2000), and discourses of Othering (e.g., Kubota, 2001) were manifested in each of the participants' narratives in some form or another. Othering is defined by Johnson (1999), who states: "Othering occurs when a group is described in a way that makes that group seem inferior to, or different from, one's own" (§ 1). While some participants engaged in dominant narratives of Othering of particular cultural groups to account for "difference", others attempted to locate alternate discourses that allowed for inclusion and diversity, as opposed to exclusion and essentialism. As I reflected in the introductory chapter of this thesis, my experiences as an EFL teacher were consistent with findings in the literature that point to



the tendencies in that field to essentialize cultures, and to posit the Self in opposition to the Other. As Kubota (2001) emphasizes, “The Othering of ESL/EFL students by essentializing their culture and language presupposes the existence of the unproblematic Self as a monolithic, normative category” (p. 10). Achebe (1974), in the context of the Othering of Africa in contrast to Europe, also sheds light on the tendency toward this colonialist binary opposition as “the desire- one might indeed say the need- in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (p. 29). In the context of this study, some of the participants presented colonialist views that are in accordance with this practice of setting up Other countries as a foil to Europe, Other cultures to the West, and Other languages to English.

Difference in English language education is often essentialized through discourses of Othering. Take, for example, the curriculum at the school I worked for in Japan, described in chapter one. Curriculum materials included engaging new students in a discussion of cultural perceptions and stereotypes. The accompanying lesson plan highlighted the differences between Western and Japanese culture, presenting questions like, “What colour is the sun?”, to which Japanese students would usually respond red, a response intended to shock Western teachers who always responded yellow or orange. Other contrived attempts to dichotomize cultures included asking what sounds particular animals make, and role playing an “introduction to a Canadian home stay” situation, complete with bowing and handshaking. Invariably, after asking the perception questions in my lesson plan, I often felt alienated from the students, and instead of the “intended” goal of inspiring conversation, I found the questions also prevented the students from

feeling comfortable in the class, often retreating into awkward silences from which I would attempt to retrieve them.

As Kubota (2001) observes, “The tendency of applied linguistics discourse to highlight cultural difference is founded on liberal humanism yet demonstrates colonial legacies, legitimating unequal relations of power between the Self and Other” (p. 28). According to Ram (2002), “The contrast between the western ‘individual’ and the non-western ‘collectivity’ is just one of many forms of the opposition between the modern and non-modern which underlie the basis of social theory’s constructions of difference” (p. 35). Dichotomous representations of Self versus Other are frequently traced to colonialist discourses. Narayan (2000) illustrates the basis for this link:

This frequently reiterated contrast between ‘Western’ and ‘Non-western’ cultures was a politically motivated colonial construction. The self-proclaimed ‘superiority’ of ‘Western culture’ functioned as the rationale and mandate for colonialism. The colonial self-portrait of ‘Western culture’ had, however, only a faint resemblance to the moral, political, and cultural values that *actually pervaded* life in Western societies. Thus liberty and equality could be represented as paradigmatic ‘Western values’, hallmarks of its civilization superiority, at the very moment when Western nations were engaged in slavery, colonization, expropriation, and denial of liberty and equality not only to the colonized but to large segments of Western subjects, including women. (p. 84)

It is notable that in this study with participants from a variety of different countries, the practice of Othering became evident, in most cases, from the very first interview. For example, in Sylvie’s case, as a Canadian SEOL, she was acutely aware of some native-English-speakers’ need to categorize her as Other based on her accent when speaking English. She elaborates on this notion, and emphasizes her own position of relative privilege in terms of race, hypothesizing how difficult it must be for non-Canadian students:

And I felt also that um, the hard thing for me is that when you, when you are like this, when you live your life like this [(as a traveller)], a lot of people will not necessarily understand and they...they're sort of asking you to, to belong somewhere? Like they're, like they have to put you into a, like I'm a French Canadian. Although I, yeah certainly, it's part of me, that's where I'm from, it's where I grew up, and it will always be a part of me, but I wouldn't (laughs) you know?

It's hard for me to identify myself with that particular thing because there's so much more that has contributed to who I am since, you know. And that's one thing that I find hard is that people will ask you to define yourself as being from somewhere, you know, that's one thing and, that's very hard because after awhile you just give up oh I'm just Quebec you know (laughs). And you will have to go further with me if you want to know more about who I really am because I'm not just Quebec, and that is one thing when you are, yeah when you have an accent, people will ask you where you're from, and people will first define you as to where you're from, you know, on the basis of where you're from.

And that, well I guess that's something you get used to, but the people who will not be interested beyond that, well then too bad (laughs). But it's true that when you have an accent that you will automatically be categorised as to where you're from you know. And for me, from Quebec it's not difficult, but I can imagine other people right? Like there's always generalities like I was making before that come into play and people tend to forget that they don't necessarily apply to individuals.

In the case of Hunter, his experiences as a student of North American culture appeared to contribute to his tendency toward Othering, which was directed towards the West, and “the American way of life” in particular. Commenting on the men he lives with in residence, he stated:

But, my flatmates are, like...in some way they are symbols for many Europeans think about the American way of life, you know, it's like getting fat, eating chips, buying the super packed ice cream, sitting on the sofa, watching television all the time, shouting at players of the hockey game, “They are lazy people”...and oh, take a big spoon of ice cream...disgusting...it's just disgusting.

However, after making these observations, Hunter appeared to be softening his criticism, and almost cautioning himself against such steadfast conclusions, adding, “On the other hand, there are many Canadian guys who are quite all right.”

In another statement, Hunter again engaged in Othering; this time identifying with North American culture, and positioning India and China as the Other, and characterizing “the Asian way”:

Um, but I think the main difference between Northern European people and people from Asia, particularly from India and China is that Northern European private sphere, like Canada and the United States is very important thing because I don't want to be bothered at certain times and I want to go bed and I want [my flatmates] to shut the fuck up. Um....but that's not the case, it's like um...I don't know, in terms of...I think people from India or from China have ah...they don't need...they are not...socialized to...to...exist on a certain space of their own. You know, it's like....it's quite difficult to explain, but imagine you are in the MUN pool and you've got one lane for yourself and there is one person per lane, 6 lanes, 6 persons. Four Asian girls enter and they all come to my lane and now we've got 5 in one lane and all the other guys have got one lane for himself (laughs) you know, that's the Asian way you know, it's like, it's like an army.

One particularly salient feature of the interviews for this study is the fact that so many of the participants engaged in the stigmatization of one cultural group specifically. SEOLs from China were directly targeted by 4 of the 6 participants as the cultural group with the most difficulties in speaking English. This theme appeared in Inder's interviews in several instances, for example, in this excerpt he points out that Chinese are generally very intelligent, but do not speak English well. My question is presented to contextualize the response. Inder addresses several countries in his comment, but ultimately focuses on China:

Jenn: So, um, when you graduated from high school, ah...you then went straight to university, or...?

Inder: Well, it's not like here, you know in university we have...colleges...so we have entrance exams, we have to appear for that, and then we go to university so...and countries like Europe and China, you will find something, I wouldn't call it strange, of course it's their culture, you have to study [Sciences] in their own native language, like in Spain in Spanish, in Italy, Italian, in Germany in German, but in India, you have to study it in English. In China, people also have a problem when Chinese come here...it's a disadvantage to them because they study all their

bachelor's degree in China, Chinese language...but we study everything in English...

Jenn: So, they have to relearn all the vocabulary again...

Inder: Well...I wouldn't say relearn, yeah sometimes relearn too, because you know...you might have come across a Chinese guy when you talk to him, it's very slow in conversation, sometimes...I mean you feel like...you just can't talk to them 'cause it's hard to make them understand what you want to say. So, you know, that's because they study everything in, well, they have a disadvantage....Chinese guys have very much more intelligence than the rest of the people in the world I would say, but you know they have disadvantage, they don't like...

He also described to me his frustration with Chinese women in particular, and after he asked me if I knew any Chinese people, we had this exchange:

Jenn: Yeah, there's a number of girls from China who I've hung out with a couple of times...

Inder: Chinese people (laughs). I don't like Chinese girls.

Jenn: You don't?

Inder: I don't like Chinese girls. It's fucking so much hard to explain them would you like to go out. (laughing). [shuts off tape to tell me a story about an experience with a Chinese girl who he had difficulty communicating with]...So, I was just keeping to myself, you know. So, you know if that makes you more curious, when you have to go ahead and ask people that...lots of stuff about person, so, I didn't want it, so I didn't try it.

Inder's tendency to reproduce discourses of difference and to impose them primarily on one specific cultural group may be attributable to his cultural background growing up in India- itself a colonized country. It appears that Inder's behaviour is consistent with the oppressors of his country, hence appropriating the very same dominant discourses that contributed to the emergence of English in Indian society. According to Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998):

From what one can see in the Indian subcontinent, the victims who say that they are victimized are a part of the culture of complaint, and are really fascinated and

lured by power and the Western way of life. That section of the population, the English educated urban elite, have become the colonizers though they were the colonized under the British rulers. (p. 57)

The theme of Othering was also apparent in Khaled's interview where he first presented generalizations in a positive sense about his own culture, hence furthering the view that some cultures are better English language learners than others. He observed, "I noticed like, people coming from the Middle East can acquire English very easily, which I don't know why." He then mirrored Inder's sentiments of the disadvantages for Asians in terms of their ability to master spoken English:

...[Asians] can't catch English. My supervisor, like I said, the Chinese one, he's really not good, I mean...when he was teaching I could barely understand him, and other students were always talking about it...really, I think it's because he's Asian, like it's really quite difficult to speak. While most of the people from the Middle East we acquire languages easily, I don't know why, I don't know...it's a different language, really different.

Continuing with this theme of stereotyping, namely of Chinese nationals, but also other countries, Hunter also indicated that he felt a certain advantage to being German in that he could acquire English easily as compared with students from other countries, specifying:

I mean the longer I'm here, the closer I get to the point where I can express my voice in English, you know. And I don't wanna think about you know, like for the Japanese, or for the Indians, or for Chinese, it's quite a problem, because you know their abilities to speak English are very limited even, even more than mine, you know? I think my English is not that bad, but ah, no I'm not tempted to hang out with them because they are German. I am now in Canada, so they are not my people right now.

The stereotyping of Asian students has been recognized in educational research; for example, Razack (1998) raises the issue of stereotyping Asian children in her discussion of research conducted in schools in English-speaking countries. She contends, "If Asians do well in school, it is because of their cultural attachment to education; if they

do badly, it is because of their failure to ‘acculturate’ in the ‘host’ society” (p. 9). Lippi-Green (1997) acknowledges the challenges for Asian Americans, who “have more and more difficult hurdles to leap before they can transcend stereotype and be accepted as individuals. Accent, when it acts in part as a marker of race, takes on special power and significance,” and goes on to argue that “(d)iscrimination against Asian Americans which centers on language, but which has more in actual terms to do with race, is an established practice” (p. 228). While this author’s findings address the particular situation for Asian Americans, some of the participants’ discussions presented here support similar practices of international students *by* international students, and, based on some of the experiences of the participants, by Canadian students as well.

In this study, it was interesting to note that the stereotyping of Asians was produced primarily in the narratives from the three male participants. As highlighted previously in the thesis, thorough gender analyses have not been performed with this data, and perspectives based on gender differences are not generalizable considering the small sample size. However, the striking difference between the ways the male and female participants engaged in discourses of difference and Othering are noteworthy, and are provided as bases for further research.

I realize the issues presented here may be painful, or at the very least troubling for readers. At first I was reluctant to include specific comments dealing with issues of racial or cultural stereotyping in my analysis, as I found the nature of some of these comments unsettling and even disturbing. In the interviews, I was confronted with the conflict of whether or not to respond to such stereotyping and generalizing, i.e. to disagree or argue against such practices. On one hand, my personal experiences and relationships with

Chinese and other Asians contributed to my view that such comments demonstrate ignorance and misinformation, and on the other hand, my research initiative necessitates that I welcome all comments from participants as to establish a relationship of trust and freedom to express all opinions and views. Additionally, considering the sheer number of such statements, the informal observations require some attempt towards an explanation, and at the very least, deserve to be recognized. In regard to this dilemma, I draw on Crawford and McLaren (1998), who argue:

A critical pedagogy should speak against the notion that all cultural realities need to follow one dominant narrative or that all diverse cultural realities need to be given a voice, since it is obvious that many of these harbor racist, classist, and sexist assumptions. The key here is not to insist simply on cultural diversity, transforming culture into a living museum of contemporary choices, but a critical diversity. (p. 146).

Adding to this view of critical pedagogy, educational research that aims to view data through a critical lens and strives to evoke questions and open dialogue in regard to diversity, such as this study, exposing such a trend in the participants' narratives provides a site for the revelation of tensions and incongruencies. I wrestled with the idea of excluding some of the comments of participants related to this theme because of their offensive nature, but through a process of deep reflection and further reading, reached the conclusion that their relevance to the study is significant because of the frequency of the theme, because almost all of the participants contributed to the discussion whether in a positive or negative sense, and because of my intention to allow participants to "speak" in this study. In addition, some of the participants refuted or provided insight into these very issues, leading me to the decision to include all types of comments related to this theme. Including almost all of the comments related to the theme then provides a means of critique, which, according to Cameron's (1998) philosophical definition means, "to



examine the conditions on which it exists, calling into question the assumptions it is based on” (p. 2). This notion of critique also informed my decision to include the potentially controversial quotes as a means of examining these pervasive assumptions.

One particular situation that cause me to reconsider what kinds of experiences should be included in this presented is described below. In a conversation with Liz, I found myself in an awkward position when confronted by my own cultural affiliation. Liz described an experience of volunteering at a local school, where she was in one instance welcomed, and in another made to feel excluded:

Liz: Last winter I volunteered in an elementary school...to work in the lab, cause I'm [interested in computers] right, I want to know how computers are used in the elementary school here. So, I was so touched by the kids here you know. Cause kids are just so kind, so sweet, they welcome you, totally welcome you. Not like the feelings adults bring you. Although you think you can welcome me too right, but not like kids. Kids are just like oh!!! (gesturing hugging and excitement). (laughing) You know I was supposed to be a teacher here, not a real teacher, but at least I'm not a student, right...cause they are only grade one students...cute, cute. And, but sometime I cannot understand their questions...oh I feel...and boys and girls at that age are very...very...direct...and you know all the adults they just say your English is very good, although we all know it's not true. But the kids, once a boy came to me and said to me, "your English is strange" and I said, "Yes, it is!" He said, "you must learn it recently, I mean your accent is not good", I said, yeah you're right. That's not, ah make me frustrated cause it's just natural, right. It's not my first language.

But once I feel, I feel...bad cause ah it's not a language problem actually it's a culture or racial problem I think? Um, I've been working with grade one, right as I've just said right now, but one day I went to the other classroom- I think it should be grade four or grade five? And they were having their lunch. And some boy and girls saw me and they realized I am an Asian people, I think- obviously and they started to sing a song. I...cannot understand, but I caught a few words out of it...it's like Chinese, Japanese and, and...I can tell from their face that the song is not a good one. It's, but it is popular I can tell because many of the kids can sing together? Yeah, and at the end of the song the boys just lie down on the ground and look like they've got hurt. I think they were acting as Japanese or Chinese people in the song. You know, I was smiling at the very beginning, right but at that time my face was frozen, but I don't know the reason...that makes me feel very bad. Cause...kids are not wrong, right? They know nothing about this culture, or this...discrimination, or...they know nothing about it. But I think if I

know what they are saying, I can speak something to them, I can explain or I can do something, but I cannot. That make me feel bad, very bad actually. By the way, do you know the song, do you know the song I'm talking about?

Jenn: No. [clearing throat]

Liz: No? Mmm...it looks very popular because at the very beginning only one boy start to sing this song and then many kids joined him, and I think it should be a popular song...like the children's song, right?

Jenn: Right...yeah. Grade four though. Like, grade one, maybe they still don't know, but grade four...

Liz: Yeah and when I first go to, went to that elementary school I went the wrong way and I found another school entry it was a high school and the kids there are just cold. So I can tell the difference...and I was so happy with the grade one kids they just...they truly like you...

My response to her story- at once inadequate, and perhaps inappropriate- requires further clarification. During her account of the negative experience with the fourth graders, I felt an overwhelming sense of empathy for Liz. I automatically felt disgusted by the cruelty of the children, and embarrassed by their ignorance. When Liz asked if I knew the rhyme, I paused, and, for some reason, lied about knowing it. I in fact recognized the rhyme from my own childhood. The words, as I recall, went something like: "Chinese, Japanese. See these. Money please." While reciting the rhyme, kids pull their eyes back to indicate the physical appearance of Chinese or Japanese eyes. So, my disgust with the children in Liz' story was really disgust for my childhood renditions of this rhyme. I remember reciting it myself, and yet, when confronted by Liz, I denied knowing it. I couldn't bear to explain it to her, and even reflecting on the experience now, do not completely understand the rhyme's meaning, and do not know where it came from. My field notes from later that evening reflected on my response in the exchange with Liz, and clearly elucidates my

disappointment in myself in not being able to answer Liz' question, and my frustration that such ignorant and hurtful practices continue in today's schools.

This is not to say I am so deluded as to believe racism has been eradicated, or that children do not engage in racist practices (whether wittingly or unwittingly), however this incident betrays my hopefulness that children are learning about diversity, and about the poisonous nature of such songs or rhymes. Liz was sceptical when I denied knowing the rhyme, and my means of dealing with the difficult situation- changing the subject- was stifling to our discussion, and unfair to Liz, as she trusted me to be honest with her. I now feel that this experience enabled me to critique my own position as researcher, and as a participant in a cross-cultural exchange. In this particular instance, I acknowledge that my ability to respond honestly and frankly is representative of my own learning process through this study. Aside from the literature review, the rigorous nature of research, and the surprisingly complex process of creating a thesis in general, I have learned about myself in the context of intercultural education, which I intend to use as a tool in my future endeavours as a language educator. This process suggests the value of such awareness and reflective practices in intercultural communication.

Sylvie also raised an important issue in regard to Othering. I asked her about the political atmosphere in Quebec as a young girl, and she replied:

Oh yeah, I think it's very...it would be very hard to grow up in Quebec and not have that teenager nationalistic phase, I think we all sort of like go through it, and then it fades away very fast, and today it's not...I think the new generation, they all, you'll see high school kids at some point wearing the Quebec flags, and the it's, today it's sort of becoming...see I'm looking for the English word now...it's just not the thing anymore...people are more about opening, I think there's something, and I'll compare with NF, because I think there's something very similar between Quebec people and NF people in Canada, and I think it comes from the isolation that they both ah, went through. Quebec was more of a cultural isolation, and NF is more geographical, but it's still, I think it's at the base of

some form of insecurity in the general population, because I feel that in NF too, it's not an individual thing, like I talk about generality.

And there is something very similar in Quebec, which has triggered these nationalistic things, the need for, for ah...recognition and identification, I think, but it's sort of fading away right now and people are sort of finally realising that it's not, you don't need boundaries to have a culture or to preserve a language and that's what they were always scared about, and I think it came from this...inborn insecurity, cause yeah they were set aside for their issues, and...you know like the Newfoundland people, but very differently? But I still feel something similar.

Through this thoughtful interpretation, Sylvie encouraged me to consider the issue of race. Sylvie did not explicitly mention race, and at the time Sylvie spoke these words, it didn't immediately occur to me. Only later when I realized hers was the only example of challenging the discourse of difference with the host culture did I sit back and ask myself: "Why haven't I discussed race?"

Race as a point of analysis or clarification became obvious to me through Sylvie's acknowledgement of similarities between Quebec culture and Newfoundland culture, as well as through the review of related literature. Sylvie's ability to draw connections between the two cultures is uncomplicated by the issue of race, as she is White. This issue is addressed in Muscio (1998), who examines the acrimonious nature of female relationships in the context of economic hegemony and racism in the United States:

There is a saying. It goes, 'If you don't face the past, you hafta keep living it.' White women are not readily compelled- much less forced- to face the past. In a white-dominated society, women of color are not generally accorded this option. At some point in life, all children realize skin color plays a major role in one's destiny of survival in this society. Little white girls learn that skin color is a non-issue when one is white. Little girls of color, however, must, at some point, grapple with *why* skin color affects destiny so dramatically. This often leads to facing the past. (p. 142).

While Sylvie, in a sense, is making connections to the past in her comparison of Quebec and Newfoundland culture, that is, historical influences on cultural psychologies,

it can be argued that it is easier for her to do so because of her Whiteness. As Muscio (1998) suggests, reflecting on the past, and being forced to face the past, is crucial for change. True diversity cannot be achieved without acknowledgement of one's own cultural history, the histories of Others, and the interaction of those histories.

The reason for introducing the issue of race in this discussion was to support the argument for *critical cultural awareness* (see Guilherme, 2002)- a term based on critical pedagogy, and which draws on Critical Theory and postmodernism- at Memorial University. When Sylvie draws similarities between her culture and the host culture, she is challenging the rigidity of cultural difference that serves to maintain existing structures of power structures clearly linked to racially-defined boundaries. Sylvie links the cultural to the political, and throughout her monologue negotiates ideas that both question and define. This type of dialogue with oneself is in keeping with postmodernism, which Guilherme (2002) maintains, "offers new insights that may empower the marginalised and subjugated cultures, it problematises cultural processes of identification, and, therefore, it may inspire a more radicalised and critical exercise of citizenship since it relates the cultural to the political" (p. 117). This process is not argued here for application only with international SEOLs, but rather to support a critical approach amongst all participants in an increasingly diverse educational institution.

As a caveat to the view that discourses of difference are necessarily negative, the practice of Othering in the area of ELT has also been acknowledged as an important means of recognizing and appreciating difference between cultures. For example, Johnson (1999) argues:

Educators should continue to use generalizations and comparisons in a professional manner to explain what they see occurring because to do so is not

only useful but also necessary. Teaching methods and topics that generally interest and engage students in Hong Kong and Krakow may not be productive in Helsinki and Kyoto -- or vice versa. The reason is that the histories, values, and cultures of the students are, indeed, different. This is not Othering; it is providing educators with useful information.)

The benefit of this view lies in its critical perspective of difference. From this perspective, difference is not essentialized, but generalizations are to be utilized as pedagogical references to be used “in a professional manner” (§ 3). In the context of intercultural learners and SEOLs, this practice can provide insight into where cultures diverge and also where connections can be made. The fundamental lesson is that differences are relative in terms of a culture’s history or widespread assumptions and beliefs, and finding such differences should not escalate into the practice of Othering, but rather serve as a productive tool for teaching and learning. As Pennycook (1994) asserts, “...in order to avoid reinscribing people within a new academic discourse, it is crucial to seek to avoid essentializing representations of the ‘Other’ (The Arabs, The Chinese, and so on) and for the ‘Other’ to find ways of achieving representation outside these discourses” (p. 60).

This section has illustrated a continuum of engagement in Othering through the participants’ own experiences. Drawing on relevant literature for support, the practice of Othering is problematized, and possible benefits to a critical approach to Othering are posited. Alternatives to cultural Othering are presented through an analysis of the participants’ contributions, as a means of explaining the basis for Othering and suggesting some of the reasons why some of the participants gravitated towards this practice. Situating dialogues of difference and Othering in historical, political, and social contexts allowed for a more holistic view of this practice as a result of colonization and

the need to interpret and understand new experiences in relation to that which is known and familiar. The chapter concludes with a brief summary presented in the next section.

## 5.9 Conclusion

As in chapter four, this chapter explored themes that emerged from the participants' contributions through interviews and their journals. Chapter five focused on themes related to culture and intercultural adjustment. Analysis revealed tendencies toward Othering, essentializing, and stereotyping as a common thread between many of the themes. Participants generally highlighted differences between the home and host cultures, rather than finding common ground between their previous and present experiences with people, the environment, economics, social conditions, and educational and institutional practices. The participants noted sources of support for them as visitors to the province, and also indicated where improvements could be made to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment. Drawing on the themes and analyses from chapters four and five, chapter six integrates and synthesizes what I have learned from this study in an attempt to provide a summary of the findings. Finally, through this summary, recommendations for the university, and implications for future research are considered.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I step back from the study to contextualize and reflect on what the study has revealed through the participants' experiences. I've come a long way from the "nama gaijin" (fresh foreigner) EFL teacher in Japan, feeling grossly inadequate because of my non-standard variety of English. I also feel I have come a long way as a researcher. I still have much to learn, but for me, the first experience of trying to capture the stories of other people, and to learn from them was rewarding and immensely satisfying in the sense that I have shared this experience with each of the participants. Tensions arose during the study in regard to scheduling difficulties, submission of the participants' journals, and in one case I even thought I had lost a participant after not hearing from her in several weeks! I learned that I could deal with these problems in a way that satisfied the participants and not lose my head in the process. But the most significant experiences for me came in the moments when my own privilege as a White, native English speaker appeared starkly against the ugly and complex backdrop of colonialism, racism, and ignorance.

This chapter presents reflections of a novice researcher. I do not purport to have unearthed definitive solutions to the issues of diversity in higher education, and I do not make claims of generalizability, however this study can make a significant contribution to the growing body of work conducted with (and about) SEOLs and international students. I now review some of the salient features of the study and consider what this means for the present, that is, how can this research affect our present-day understanding of the experiences of SEOLs? Through this review, recommendations for evolving a



model of diversity and understanding at Memorial University are suggested. These suggestions as well as unanswered questions for future initiatives are presented as a guide for researchers, the university, and the community at large.

## 6.2 SEOLs and diversity in higher education

Based on the findings, several key themes are presented here to highlight the participants' experiences as SEOLs at Memorial University. Through this study, I hoped to learn about what it means to be a SEOL graduate student at Memorial University. The purpose of the study was ultimately to provide insight, as opposed to reaching definitive conclusions, and the knowledge produced by this study represents only one piece of the puzzle. The study focussed on two primary themes of language and culture, and the interaction of both in an overall context of diversity in higher education.

The notion of diversity is elucidated by Siegel (2003), who contends:

Diversity, important and meaningful in its own right, has also become a key metaphor for such ideals as open-mindedness, sympathetic engagement with people and issues, the ability to understand and appreciate the life circumstances and perspectives of others, border crossing, cross-cultural competence, and even intellectual dexterity. Our modern condition of increasing boundarylessness makes all of these attributes or capacities- and their cultivation and deployment- ever more important. (p. 8)

I raise this issue of diversity here as a statement of fact, that is, *boundarylessness*, or globalization necessarily increases diversity in the physical sense, if not psychologically and if not reflected culturally (both in the micro and macro sense). Diversity is also presented as a major factor in this study because of the university's claim, introduced in chapter one, that it is a global institution that can provide a quality experience to a culturally diverse student population despite the current perceived homogeneity of the

campus. The next sections (re)introduce language and communication, and culture and a language of critique as reiterations of major themes from the study, and points of departure for dialogue about what these themes mean for the university.

### 6.2.1 *Language and communication*

This thesis draws on postmodernism and critical education for an analysis of narrative accounts based on the personal experiences of six SEOLs at Memorial University. One theme that arose throughout the study is that of legitimacy, and the role of native English speakers in the adjustment experiences of SEOLs. The thesis draws on the work of Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b, 1991b), and his notions of *symbolic power* and *legitimate discourse*; Norton (2000), for her application of Bourdieu's theories in the context of immigrant English language learners in Canada, and Lave and Wenger's (1991) *legitimate peripheral participation*. These works demonstrate the complex social nature of learning to speak English, and learning to participate in the academic environment of the new culture. In this section, salient themes and perspectives related to the issue of critical intercultural communication are presented.

Guilherme (2002) offers a discussion of the *intercultural speaker*, drawing on Byram's (1997) notion of *intercultural communicative competence*, which refers to the ability of an individual to interact interculturally, that is, with members of other cultures, in a foreign language. Guilherme asserts that in foreign language learning, the goal has shifted from the attainment of native-like competence to "the interaction between cultural actors, that is, on the intercultural encounter" (p. 124). Drawing on postmodernist views of the fragmented, fluctuating identity, and building on Byram's work, Guilherme

generates the concept of the *critical intercultural speaker*. The author emphasizes “the *critical* intercultural speaker is aware of the multiple, ambivalent, resourceful, and elastic nature of cultural identities in an intercultural encounter” (p. 125). Guilherme notes the significance of this notion of identity in language/culture learning, in addition to the ways in which these learners are positioned in the interaction, and the speaker’s ability to negotiate between the home culture and the new culture. This concept can be linked to discussions in chapters four and five that indicate the social significance of communication for SEOLs, for example through Bourdieu’s (1977a) notion of *legitimate discourse*, and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of *legitimate peripheral participation*. Using the notion of critical intercultural speaker as a lens through which to view the participants’ contributions in this study, it is possible to infer areas where the university, and, more importantly, the members of that community can assist in promoting and fostering diversity on campus.

Chapter four emphasized the nature of learning English and the conditions required for communication in this language. The first theme introduced the notion of Standard English. The view of English as a monolithic entity is deconstructed in Pennycook (1994) who argues that in the current view of English, “What is not acknowledged is that ‘English’ may indeed be fragmented, struggled over, resisted, rejected, diverse, broken, centrifugal and even incommensurable with itself” (p. 28). Some of the participants in the study invested in the notion of an ideal or standard English, while others appeared to experience some personal conflict with the notion, although they had not yet acquired a vocabulary to express this conflict, that is, the vocabulary of critique, not the English vocabulary.

Sleeter and Grant's (1987) definition of multicultural education for higher education is summarized in Morey and Kitano (1997):

Multicultural education has as its purpose the development of citizens for a more democratic society through provision of more accurate and comprehensive disciplinary knowledge and through enhancement of students' academic achievement and critical thinking applied to social problems. It seeks to promote the valuing of diversity and equal opportunity for all people through understanding of the contributions and perspectives of people of differing race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and physical abilities and disabilities. (p. 12)

This definition offers the notion that such initiatives focus not on the Other, that is the minority or marginalized members of the community, but emphasizes equality for all participants. As Sleeter and Grant (1987) maintain, a major flaw in traditional approaches to multicultural education lies in the emphasis of "culture at the expense of social stratification," which, "may suggest to those Whites who prefer not to confront racism that maintaining and valuing cultural differences is *the* main goal of multicultural education" (p. 433). This approach necessitates a critical exploration of the historical, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of the dominant culture, and in this study, language. The authors' assertion that critical thinking is integral to multicultural education aligns with the previous discussion of the critical intercultural speaker, and the importance of problematizing assumptions. This view of multicultural education also suggests that faculty can play an important role in promoting diversity and understanding in their positions as providers of "more accurate and comprehensive disciplinary knowledge and through enhancement of students' academic achievement and critical thinking applied to social problems" (p. 433).

The theme of self-efficacy introduced in chapter four revealed the contrapuntal nature of SEOLs views of their own competence in English, and reflects the significance

of the situation, as opposed to a static perception of ability. Based on the above discussion of multicultural education, it is clear that faculty can and should assist in supporting SEOLs in developing self-efficacy in English through an emphasis not only on the individual, but also on the conditions for communication provided by the learning environment. As Singleton (1989) posited:

‘Real’ communication presumably refers to using the target language to interact in ways similar to those in which one interacts in one’s native language, that is to say, using the language for the sake of relationships to be maintained, business to be transacted, information to be exchanged or aesthetic pleasure to be received or given, rather than for the sake of forms to be practices. In this sense, real communication can actually occur within the classroom, as the entire literature on communicative language teaching makes clear. (p. 257).

This supports the notion that language learning involves factors both internal and external to the individual learner, and provides an argument for greater involvement of instructors in the language socialization of SEOLs in higher education.

Chapter four also introduced some of the participants’ views that suggested the inevitability of learning English. Particularly in academia, English appears to have reached the status of *native scholarly language* (Flowerdew, 2000), a notion supported by Pennycook (1994) who, in the context of postcolonialism offers historical context:

As English spread into Africa through trade, missionary work and education, it developed close ties with religion, intellectual work and politics. As the definition of what it meant to be ‘educated’ came to be seen increasingly in terms of ability in English (or other European languages), speaking English and being an intellectual came to be almost synonymous. (p. 261).

In the context of this study, some of the participants pointed to English as an international language, a notion that is problematized in Ndebele (1987), who states, “The very concept of an international, or world, language was an invention of Western imperialism” (pp. 3-4). Pennycook (1994) also contributes to this discussion: “two central fallacies in

modern linguistics, namely the idea that language transparently reflects either a real world or the thoughts of a person and the belief that language communities share a fixed code through which they communicate similar meanings to each other” (p. 29). Revisiting Sleeter and Grant’s (1987) concept of multicultural education, SEOLs in this study appear to have aligned themselves with English as an international language that provides a neutral site for intercultural communication, another theme presented in chapter four. This is not surprising, considering they themselves have achieved a certain amount of success through learning English. However, their narratives also revealed the theme of status and access for speakers of English, and this view, combined with the notion of English as a neutral *lingua franca* suggest the need for support in terms of deconstructing the nature of English, and its colonialist roots. Pennycook (1994) posits, “...rather than according some a priori ontological status to English in the world, English as an International Language can be understood as a discursive construct; rather than being some objective descriptive category, it is a whole system of power/knowledge relationships which produce very particular understandings of English and English language teaching” (p. 36).

### *6.2.2 Culture and a language of critique*

This section discusses the themes presented in chapter five and the ways in which these themes might inform the university’s practices and the larger context of cultural diversity. In chapter five, the focus shifted from language to culture, based on themes from the analysis of participants’ contributions. The first theme introduced in chapter five discussed SEOLs’ perceptions of Newfoundlanders, and some perceptions of the local

people as described by the participants. The primary issue raised through this theme is that of ignorance and misinformation, both from the SEOLs and Newfoundlanders. I argue that the ignorance of both parties is significant, but that the lack of exposure to, or the unwillingness of members of the dominant culture to learn about the countries and cultures of SEOLs is particularly salient in light of the university's aim to promote diversity on campus. Increasing dialogue and supporting informed discovery of one another's cultures should be a mandate of the university, as suggested through the participants' experiences.

Drawing on Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, and Mallory's (2003) framework of diversity development in higher education, this ignorance is represented in the first dimension of their framework, *unawareness/lack of exposure to the Other*. The authors assert that individuals at this level of the model, "...benefit from activities that facilitate reflection on types of differences they are likely to be aware of such as religion, body type, personality, and personal habits" (pp. 459-60). Similarly, Ortiz and Rhoads (2000), in their framework for multicultural education offer as a first step *understanding culture*. The goal of this initial step is for students to, "understand how culture shapes their lives and how they shape culture through their interactions" (p. 86). In addition, this framework emphasizes *recognising and deconstructing White culture* as a means of "helping students to see that Whites have culture, and that White culture has become in many ways the unchallenged, universal basis for racial identity" (p. 88).

The notion of critical cultural awareness was also raised in chapter five through the participants' comparisons of home and host cultures. Participants primarily displayed a tendency toward contrasting the two cultures, with the exception of Sylvie, the

participant from Quebec. In keeping with the above discussion regarding information, this theme also suggested a general lack of awareness and information for SEOLs about the host culture and the surrounding community in general. This might be accounted for by the fact that at the graduate level, significant demands are placed on the participants' time, or may be attributed to the fact that many participants expressed some amount of alienation from native speakers, and most indicated their peer groups consisted mainly of people from their own country, or acquaintances they encountered only in academic settings. This tendency to display a lack of knowledge about the host culture is related to the role of support in cross-cultural adjustment, a theme presented in chapter five through both positive and negative experiences, and accounts of challenges encountered by these SEOLs. The narratives presented in these sections position the university as a major source of both facilitation and hindrance of cross-cultural adjustment and socialization. In examining these experiences, it is clear that education must entail much more than content-based instruction, and must extend to a broader context of intercultural awareness for all students, not just those from outside the host culture.

Again, Ortiz and Rhoads' (2000) framework can inform this discussion. In its second step, the framework engages students in *learning about Other cultures*, a stage involving a deeper-level understanding of cultures through interaction with Others. Chavez, et al. (2003) present a series of dimensions in their framework which would also support this awareness of Other cultures, including *questioning/self-exploration*, a process involving a more relativistic view of cultures, significant intercultural encounters, and catalysts for further exploration. *Risk-taking/exploration of Otherness* requires the individual to move beyond the relativist position to "confront [their] own perception



about the Other” (p. 459). Their ultimate dimension, integration/validation involves “making complex choices about validating others”, and represents intercultural competency, and the ability to “affirm and validate others’ experience” (p. 459).

Perhaps the most troubling experiences and perspectives shared by the participants were encompassed in the final themes of stereotypes and generalizations, and discourses of difference and Othering. While the common thread from the findings of the study has culminated in the realization of a lack of awareness, information, and understanding, nowhere was the message clearer than in these two themes. Stereotyping and generalizing pose a risk to diversity because, by definition, they promote the perpetuation of misinformation and extend individual biases and one-time impressions to all-encompassing generalizations. Othering, in particular, is a poisonous extension of stereotyping and generalizing, and was revealed through narratives of bigotry and ignorance. Participants told of instances where they were Othered by members of the dominant culture/language, while other participants engaged in Othering, namely of subordinated cultures/languages outside of their ethnic/racial group.

The fact that the participants in this study were all beyond the undergraduate level (five graduate students, one post-graduate student) is telling in that it suggests the need for more rigorous education in the classroom that includes some form of cultural critique and critical pedagogy. According to Aronowitz and Giroux (1993), “Few efforts are being made to rethink the entire curriculum in the light of the new migration and immigration, much less develop entirely different pedagogies” (p. 6). Considering the emphasis placed on faculty support by participants in this study, and the obvious impact simple actions such as meeting with students after class can have on the overall

experiences of SEOLs, it is apparent that efforts of faculty to integrate critical cultural awareness and facilitation of classroom environments conducive to learning for SEOLs can make a significant difference in the learning experiences of these students. Seemingly insignificant practices such as assisting SEOLs in preparation of oral presentations or assigning groups can support success of such students, and can contribute to a culturally diverse environment for all students. Giroux (1996) maintains, "Despite the growing diversity of students in both public schools and higher education, there are few examples of curriculum sensitivity to the multiplicity of economic, social, and cultural factors bearing on a student's educational life" (p. 50). While Giroux's suggestions refer to the implementation of cultural studies in colleges of education, the recommendations in this study imply a less formal, more integrated means of introducing critical cultural awareness within the various disciplines through a pedagogy which reflects critique and the nature of language as "a site of social contestation" (p. 49). The adoption of an interdisciplinary critical approach to higher education can be informed by Giroux's assertion that:

Cultural studies also rejects the notion of pedagogy as a technique or set of neutral skills, arguing instead that pedagogy is a cultural practice understandable only through considerations of history, politics, power, and culture... Pedagogy becomes in this instance the terrain through which students critically engage and challenge the diverse cultural discourses, practices, and popular media they experience in their everyday existence. (pp. 44-45).

In addition to the frameworks discussed throughout this section (i.e. Chavez et al, 2003; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000), the notion of critical pedagogy informs the need for delivery of support through the micro-level channels of the university, and implies a bottom-up approach to intercultural diversity and understanding.

This section has presented a brief outline of the major themes arrived on in this study. Themes were analyzed critically and offered as means to examine potential sites of change and improvement for the university. All of the themes presented were derived from the experiences of participants, and subsequent attempts to interpret and make meaning from those experiences. According to McLaren and Giroux (1997), “The struggle over how to name and transform experience is one of the most crucial issues in critical pedagogy and the fight for social change” (p. 26). The authors also assert:

Only when we can name our experiences- give voice to our own world and affirm ourselves as active social agents with a will and purpose-can we begin to transform the meaning of those experiences by critically examining the assumptions upon which those experiences are built. (p. 26)

This implicates individual members of the university community- students, faculty, staff, and administration- in assuming responsibility for the development of diversity on campus.

### 6.3 Summary of recommendations and implications for further research

This section summarizes recommendations for the university and implications for future research in this area, as described above in detail. The foremost recommendation of this research indicates the need for comprehensive multicultural education throughout the university. This recommendation suggests the need for interdisciplinary critical pedagogy, and a more concerted effort from faculty to promote critical thinking in their respective courses. The recommendation also implicates the university as a whole in putting forth a more specific mandate for diversity as an epistemology or ideology as opposed to a matter of fact result of international recruitment efforts. Such initiatives cannot be implemented through university reports or news releases. Nor can diversity be

achieved through the recruitment of international students and SEOLs alone. Rather, individuals must be encouraged through education to examine their own cultural standpoint. Perhaps the most crucial findings of this thesis point to the need for individual reflection and intentional focus on dismantling preconceived notions of privilege and Othering by all members of the university community. By emphasizing the need for multicultural education not only for the diverse Others on campus, i.e. non-White, or non-native-English-speakers, but for those who view their culture as a non-culture or standard culture, the notions of multiculturalism and critical intercultural understanding take on a different, more integral meaning in the diversification of the university.

Similarly, if future research initiatives focus on the ways in which various units of the university can support critical diversity, the issues presented here can provide a starting point for inquiry. As highlighted in the thesis, some areas requiring further exploration include locating more Canadian SEOLs in such research, particularly Aboriginal SEOLs whose specific culture, linguistic, ethnic, and political contexts have not yet been adequately addressed on this campus. In addition, some gender differences were highlighted in this work, and a more in-depth gender analysis could potentially uncover rich data, and more implications should gender be the primary focus for a thesis or report. Finally, researching a completely different sample of student or faculty SEOLs, or both, would provide a wealth of information that may support, refute, and supplement the work already accomplished through this study. Ultimately, recommendations included here are provided as encouragement for any practical improvements or research initiatives that will further the knowledge of SEOLs and their experiences at Memorial University.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the experiences of Speakers-of-English-as-an-Other-Language through their own words and following a skeletal design as a guide for this process. This exploration revealed a variety of different experiences, which culminated in a series of themes, related to the initial question, and provides insight into the ways in which SEOLs experience life in different ways at Memorial University. The emphasis on the articulation of such experiences by the participants themselves led the study in a multitude of directions, and each encounter was interesting and informative, resulting in a number of suggestions for future practice.

The study also provided an opportunity for me to reflect on my own assumptions and my position(s) as a member of the university community. Listening to the ways in which participants felt about their experiences, particularly those experiences to which I could relate, or had been a part of similar situations, encouraged me to think deeply about how I can contribute to or hinder the adjustment of SEOLs and the overall diversity of the campus. This process is recommended as a tool for increasing intercultural relations at this university, and is a starting point for improvement in the support and maintenance of diversity and understanding amongst all members of the university.

One area of significance of this study is its engagement of SEOLs themselves in “dialogue about difference” (McLaren & Giroux, 1997, p. 69). As these authors argue:

It is in this sense that the university is invited to become truly plural and dialogical, a place where students are not only required to read texts but to understand contexts. A place where educators are required to learn to talk about student experiences and then form this talk into a philosophy of learning and a praxis of transformation. (p. 69)

Through this engagement in *dialogue about difference*, it is hoped that the discourses surrounding SEOLs and diversity on this campus will develop into multidimensional issues that can be viewed as a means of feasible and reasonable social change. SEOLs, like all students in higher education, face numerous challenges to adjustment and socialization into academia and professional development. In exploring the ways challenges to SEOLs are compounded by linguistic and cultural barriers, this study is intended to initialize a movement toward change in discourses of diversity on this campus.

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## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS

### *Interview One*

Name of Interviewee: ..... Date:.....  
Start Time:..... End Time:.....

#### 1. Introductory/ Background Questions:

- *Where were you born?*
- *What is your first language?*
- *Do you speak any other languages?*
- *Why did you learn English?*
- *Where did you learn English?*
- *What year of study are you in at Memorial?*
- *How did you hear about Memorial?*
- *Why did you decide to come to Memorial?*
- *Can you describe your educational experiences prior to coming to Memorial University?*
- *Tell me about some particular experiences with English (speaking/ writing/ reading/ listening) up to and including this stage in your education?*

#### 2. Focus on current experiences as a SEOLS at Memorial University:

- *How would you describe your overall experience as a student at Memorial University?*
- *Describe some particular experiences in your classes at Memorial.*
- *Describe some specific experiences you have had as a SEOL in St. John's, NL.*
- *Have you taken advantage of any support services on- or off-campus? If so, which services?*
- *Are there any services you wish had been available to you? If so, what kind of services?*
- *How do you feel as a SEOL in this particular programme? Is there anything you would change about your programme? What do you like about your programme?*

#### 3. Concluding each interview:

Multiple interviews were conducted with each participant. Each interview concluded with a discussion about the next meeting at which time we decided the time, place, and in some cases perhaps even a topic or specific issue for discussion. This provided participants time to reflect on what they wanted to say, and perhaps even write some things down to prepare for our following meeting.

## *Interview Two*

Name of Interviewee: ..... Date:.....  
Start Time:..... End Time:.....

### 1. Education:

- *Describe your hometown (people, institutions, population, physical characteristics, climate, etc.)*
- *Describe the school(s) you attended growing up. What was the language of instruction? What opportunities did you have to speak English? Did you have the opportunity to speak English with native English speakers?*
- *Have you observed classes in any schools in the St. John's region since beginning this programme? If so, what is the biggest difference you have noticed between schools in St. John's and the school(s) in your community?*
- *What are your impressions of the method of instruction used by your professors here at Memorial?*
- *What problems are you experiencing in relation to your studies? How are you solving them?*
- *What is the most enjoyable thing about this programme for you?*
- *What kind of writing are you required to do for your courses? Are these kinds of writing assignments new for you?*
- *Are you taking/ have you taken an English course here at MUN? Was it required? How do you feel about having to take an English course? Do you feel it is helpful to you as a student?*
- *What do you think the English professor is looking for in your writing? Does this differ from the expectations of professors in other courses?*

### 2. Language: (revisit responses from Interview 1 if desired)

- *How did you learn English? Can you recall specific methods of instruction of English teachers?*
- *How often do you speak in your mother tongue while attending Memorial?*
- *How often do you write in your mother tongue while attending Memorial?*
- *Do you feel your personality changes according to the language you are speaking/writing in?*

### 3. Culture:

- *What cultural differences have you observed between your hometown and St. John's?*
- *Do you recall experiencing any type of culture shock upon arrival? Are you still experiencing culture shock?*

- *Do you feel that you have encountered difficulties here specifically because of cultural differences/ cultural misunderstandings?*
- *Who do you hang out with here?*

### *Interview three*

Interview three was text-based and provided an opportunity to go back to the participant with questions about previous interviews so that they could elaborate on responses and clarify previous statements. The following is a guide, and while most of the questions were the same, I personalized the interviews for each participant as a means of clarifying previous responses, or gaining a more in-depth understanding of their experiences:

- *What would you like your pseudonym to be in the thesis?*
- *Do you feel at home living here in St. John's? Please explain.*
- *Reflect on the past two semesters, how has your perception of MUN and Newfoundland changed or evolved since your arrival?*
- *What are you learning about yourself at MUN? What are you learning about the nature of cultural and linguistic differences from this experience?*
- *How do you feel about your accent when you speak in English? Do you feel that speaking English with a "non-native" accent somehow indicates a deficiency or flaw in your level of proficiency? Is there an ideal English accent?*
- *How has learning English benefited you as an individual?*
- *Please comment on the following statement: "English is the universal language of communication".*
- *What could you do to improve your life at MUN (as a language learner)? What could your professors do to improve your life at MUN? What could the university do to improve your life at MUN? What could other students do to improve your life at MUN?*
- *Reflect on our interview sessions, give feedback, ask questions, etc.*
- *What are your goals for the future as a student?*
- *Is there anything else you would like to add that you feel we have not yet touched on in prior sessions?*

The third interview was also an opportunity for participants to view the analysis of their interview and to offer suggestions or changes to my interpretation.

## APPENDIX F: JOURNAL GUIDE

### Exploring the Experiences of Speakers of English as an Other Language at Memorial University: Journal Guide

Thank you for volunteering to keep a journal for the study. As I have mentioned, you can write as much or as little as you wish in your journal, but I ask that you write at least one entry per week. As the study explores your experiences as a speaker of English as an Other language, I don't want to tell you what to write. Rather, I prefer that you decide what is significant in your daily life as a student at Memorial University and write about that. As a guide, I have listed several questions below. Please feel free to use these questions to help start the writing process, but remember that the journal is about what you feel is significant, so feel free to write about whatever experiences you choose.

You may write your journal in a notebook, on loose paper, or you may type your journal entries on the computer. All entries are to be submitted to me as data, but they will not be analyzed for spelling and grammar mistakes, so don't worry too much about writing perfectly. If you choose to type your journal entries, I will need you to either print a copy for me, or you can give me a disk containing the information. Also, if you type your entries, please don't forget to save back up copies of the file.

#### Guiding Questions:

1. How would you describe your overall experience as a student at Memorial University?
2. Describe some particular experiences in your classes at Memorial.
3. Describe some experiences you have had as a Speaker of English as an Other Language in St. John's, NL.
4. How do you feel as a Speaker of English as an Other Language in your particular programme? Is there anything you would change about your programme? What do you like about your programme?
5. Describe some particular experiences with English (speaking, writing, reading, listening) up to and including this stage in your education.
6. When and how often do you speak English while attending Memorial? When and how often do you speak in your mother tongue while attending Memorial?
7. Do you feel your personality changes according to the language you are speaking/writing in?
8. Do you feel that you have encountered difficulties here at Memorial specifically because of cultural differences?

These are some things to think about during your participation in the study. Please feel free to email me with any questions, or to discuss your journal in further detail.

Thank you again, I look forward to reading about your experiences!

Jenn









